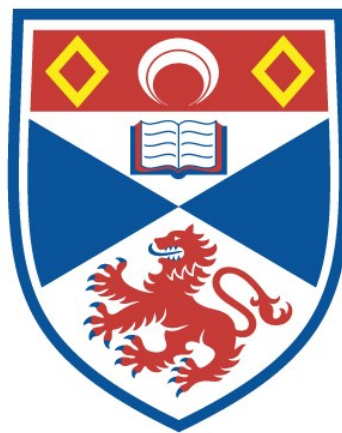


BRITAIN AND CORSICA 1728-1796: POLITICAL INTERVENTION AND THE MYTH OF LIBERTY

Luke Paul Long

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
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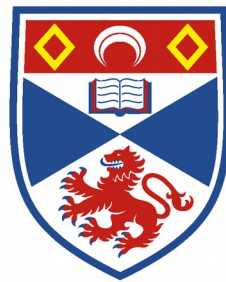
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Britain and Corsica 1728-1796: Political intervention and the myth of liberty

Luke Paul Long



University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of
PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

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I, Luke Paul Long, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, or principally by myself in collaboration with others as acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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I, Luke Paul Long, received assistance in the writing of this thesis in respect of [language, grammar, spelling or syntax], which was provided by Jason Isbit and James Macwhirter.

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Abstract

Britain's foreign relations formed a crucial component of the political nation during the eighteenth century. Foreign affairs were a key issue of state, and perceived failure within European power politics could cause the fall of government ministries. Britain's foreign relations with the main European powers, and especially France and Spain, have been extensively recorded. Britain's unique relationship with Corsica has been neglected. Corsica can appear to be insignificant compared to other European states. Many British writers, however, government officials, naval and military officers, considered Corsica to be of the highest importance within eighteenth-century foreign affairs. Corsica was especially important within the larger sphere of Anglo-French rivalry. Corsica was one of the few territories that was ruled by both nations during the eighteenth century. This thesis reveals that Britain's relations with Corsica were far more significant than has been previously realised. Britain's relations and interactions with Corsica remained relatively consistent throughout the period from 1728 up until 1796. The two main developments to occur between Britain and Corsica during the eighteenth century were, firstly, the 'Corsican crisis' (1768-1769) and, secondly, the establishment of an Anglo-Corsican Kingdom (1794-1796). These are discussed in chapter 2 and chapter 4 of the thesis respectively. Both of these 'events' have been studied as being separate from each other and as confined to their respective periods of time. This thesis aims to link and to compare these two key developments for the first time, and to show that the Corsican crisis directly influenced the Anglo-Corsican constitution in 1794. Corsica was the largest European territory to be ruled by Britain during the eighteenth century. The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom provides a unique insight into how Britain might rule conquered territories in Europe. The thesis charts and explains Britain's relations with Corsica against the background of the second hundred years war against France.

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This thesis has been three years in the making, and has been an enlightening and exciting journey. My first and greatest thanks has to go to my supervisor, who first convinced me to apply for this PhD. His knowledge and expertise has been invaluable, and has helped complete the thesis. I would not have been able to finish it without his help. My second thanks goes to my editor Jason Isbit, for his late hours spent reading through my thesis. I also thank his friend James Macwhirter for helping in this endeavour.

I am very grateful for the National Archives and British Library, both in London, for the easy access they provided to their archives. Their facilities greatly aided me in completing the thesis. I also have to thank the University of Sussex library, for allowing me access to many books vital for my research. Of course the Online archive, and other such websites provided me with many valuable sources that were easy to access. I also would like to thank the University of St Andrews for providing me the time and opportunity to write this thesis. The online access they provided was also invaluable.

Finally, and would like to thank my family and friends, who helped me throughout the three years I spent writing me thesis. I particular, I would like to thank my parents, for their steadfast support, financially and emotionally during these three years. Also my brother, aided me with his technical skills, and most importantly of all, kept me grounded and on track throughout the writing of this thesis. I am forever thankful for the loving support provided by my family, and in part dedicate this thesis to them.

Britain and Corsica 1728-1796: Political intervention and the myth of liberty

Introduction

In September 1794, Sir John Moore (1761-1809) was a British officer serving in Britain's recent conquest from France, the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom (1794-1796). The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was formed during the French Revolutionary wars (1792-1799). It was this context that led Moore to conclude that "the sentiment which pervades the country [of Corsica] is that they must be under some foreign power".¹ The problem was which foreign power would dominate Corsica: Britain or France? This was the primary question concerning the future of Corsica throughout the eighteenth century. Corsica was centrally involved within the broader spectrum of Anglo-French rivalry. This Anglo-French rivalry during the eighteenth century has been dubbed the 'Second hundred years war'. The 'Second hundred years war' was a term first coined by John Robert Seeley (1834-1895) in a series of lectures, later published as *The Expansion of England* (1883). Seeley came to this conclusion due to the series of wars between Britain and France that took place 'symmetrically' during the period 1689-1815.² Corsica became one of the many battle grounds during this period, as the two nations attempted to gain supremacy in Europe and throughout the world. This was all the more remarkable since Britain in particular had no previous contact or relations with Corsica.

Corsica had been dominated by the Genoese Republic since the fourteenth century. Corsica was of seemingly little importance throughout the history the of Mediterranean. David Abulafia, states in his book *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (2011) that Corsica has not featured in his work as often as the other islands such as Sardinia, Majorca, Crete or Cyprus. This is due to the fact that Corsica "offered fewer facilities for trans-Mediterranean shipping, and fewer products of its own than the other islands" in the Mediterranean.³ Why then did this relatively

¹ Sir John Moore, *The Diary of Sir John Moore*, vol. I, ed. Sir J.F. Maurice, (London: Edward Arnold, 1904), 120.

² Sir John Robert Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures*, (London: Macmillan and Co, 1914), 28-29.

³ David Abulafia, *The great sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean*, (London: Penguin books, 2011), 515.

unimportant island captivate both France and Britain to annex it? During the eighteenth century these two powers did not fight over the more ‘important’ Mediterranean islands, such as Sardinia, Crete or Cyprus. Only Minorca and Malta received a similar amount of attention from both powers during the eighteenth century. Why was this the case? The answer is not simple, and this PhD project will shed light on this subject. How did Corsica continue to captivate British interest throughout the eighteenth century?

France’s relationship with Corsica during the eighteenth century has been excellently recorded in English, by Thadd Hall in *France and the eighteenth century Corsican Question* (1971). Hall’s book covers in detail the opinions and policies of successive French ministries on Corsica, following the beginning of the Corsican revolt against Genoese rule in 1728. Genoa after 1685 ‘sank’ into “a state of tutelage to France”; therefore, France always had a vested interest in Genoese affairs.⁴ Genoa’s location and control of the Ligurian coastline made it strategically important for France. Control of Genoa ensured for France access into Italy. Corsica was also vital for French strategic interests in the Western Mediterranean. Its close location to France’s main Mediterranean port Toulon (see appendix 1), made the island of vital importance for successive French ministries. The break out of the first major rebellion in 1728 made Genoese rule of the island tenuous. Genoa’s inability to suppress the revolt highlighted their weakness. The French ministry feared that a major foreign power could seize control of Corsica.⁵ The Spanish for example were also interested in Corsica; they had had previous historical ties with the island. Of more concern for France was the interest of the maritime powers of England and Holland. Hall noted that in 1735 and 1736 saw the “arrival of two small English ships, laden with supplies, that offered temporary respite” to the Corsican rebels.⁶ France’s plan from 1737 was a “policy of pacifying the rebellion in Corsica in order to prevent other powers from establishing themselves there and of keeping Genoa within the French sphere of interest”.⁷ France sent troops to Corsica a number of times, in order to ward off any

4 Thadd Hall, *France and the Eighteenth Century Corsican Question*, (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 5.

5 Hall, *France and the Corsican Question*, 27.

6 Hall, *France and the Corsican Question*, 31.

7 Hall, *France and the Corsican Question*, 51.

British attempt upon the island. During the Seven Years War (1756-1763), the French ministry decided to “take early measures in order that the English do not seize Corsica”; French troops were subsequently sent to the island.⁸

What is clear from Hall’s book is the consistent British interest in Corsica. Fear of a British seizure of Corsica prompted France to react many times during the century. This would culminate with the French annexation of Corsica in 1768, after ‘buying’ the island from Genoa. However, despite the importance of Britain’s role during these events, no separate work has appeared detailing them like Hall has done with the French position. No historian has looked at the relationship between Corsica and Britain directly as a sole focus. I hope to alleviate this ‘gap’ within the historiography. This PhD project will understand the importance of Corsica through a British standpoint. Corsica can serve as a conduit through which the major foreign and political issues of the growing British Empire can be more easily understood. This work will also illustrate that British interest in Corsica was relatively consistent throughout the eighteenth century, especially within British newspapers and periodicals.

Thadd Hall’s book finishes its narrative 1769, with the French conquest of the island. His previous work *Thought and Practice of Enlightened Government in French Corsica* (1969) deals with the years of French rule of Corsica from 1769-1789. Hall argued that the French administrators of Corsica did not implement despotic tendencies. On the contrary, they saw a “ground suitable for experimentation with new ideas and new institutions”.⁹ This was similar to the British plans for Corsica in 1794. Sir Gilbert Elliot (1751-1814), the Viceroy of the new Anglo-Corsican Kingdom, described the “efficiency of the new system” of government formed on Corsica.¹⁰ Elliot called the new government an “experiment” that was “highly encouraging” after the formation of the first parliament.¹¹ The idea of an ‘experiment’ conjures the notion that British legislators on Corsica were attempting something new. Hall’s article

⁸ Hall, *France and the Corsican Question*, 102.

⁹ Hall, “Thought and Practice of Enlightened Government in French Corsica”, *The American Historical Review*, vol 74, no 3, (1969), 880-905, 885.

¹⁰ FO 20/7, Elliot to Portland, no 57, 3rd April 1795.

¹¹ FO 20/7, Elliot to Portland, no 57, 3rd April 1795.

describes the respective plans of the French administrators of Corsica. French rule of the island saw the creation of a Corsican nobility. The French however “saw the nobility as a balancing factor in society, not as the dominant force”.¹² The French attempted to implement enlightenment ideals on Corsica; the administrators of Corsica were ‘steeped’ in the ideas of the philosophes and physiocrats.¹³ The French administration did not merely treat Corsica as a conquered territory. General Louis-Charles René, the Comte de Marbeuf informed the French minister the Duc de Choiseul that “nothing exists there (Corsica), so to speak, and everything remains to be established”.¹⁴

Corsica was a blank canvas, from which the foundations of a brand new ‘enlightened’ administration could be formed. This stemmed from the idea that human history had developed in different stages. Adam Smith, in his famous work *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) reflected upon the development of cities and towns after the fall of the Roman Empire. For Smith, towns and cities “arrived at liberty and independency [sic] much earlier than the occupiers of the land in the country”.¹⁵ Societies originally formed as pastoral states, based entirely upon herds of livestock. These would eventually develop into agrarian societies following the development of agriculture. This led to the development of more permanent settlements. Ancient Greece and Rome were primarily agrarian societies. After the fall of the Roman empire, cities began to band together for mutual defence during the uncertain times of the Dark ages.¹⁶ These towns and cities began to promote free trade with each other, and after some time were “erected into a commonalty or corporation”.¹⁷ The “commerce and manufactures gradually introduced order and good government, and with them, the liberty and security of individuals”.¹⁸ For Smith, the commerce and manufactures of cities “have been the cause and occasion of the improvement and cultivation of the country”.¹⁹ This represented the next ‘stage’ of human development; a modern commercial society

12 Hall, “Thought and practice in French Corsica”, 892.

13 Hall, “Thought and practice in French Corsica”, 896.

14 Hall, “Thought and practice in French Corsica”, 885.

15 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Ed Edwin Camon, vol. 1, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 420.

16 Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 424.

17 Smith, *The wealth of nations*, 423.

18 Smith, *The wealth of nations*, 433.

19 Smith, *The wealth of nations*, 440.

which most states of Europe found themselves in at the beginning of the eighteenth century. This was what made Corsica both intriguing and fascinating for British writers. The island appeared to be at an earlier stage of development than the rest of Europe; it was still within the earlier agrarian stage that had characterised both the ancient Greece and Rome.

One of the main books which has covered the British rule of the island is Desmond Gregory's *The Ungovernable Rock* (1985), in which Gregory provides a relatively comprehensive study of the 'ungovernable rock'. However, Gregory's book focuses more upon Britain's 'quest' for a base in the Western Mediterranean.²⁰ For Gregory, only with the loss of Minorca in 1783 would Britain's interest in Corsica be "revived".²¹ Gregory primarily views the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom within the broader context of the French revolutionary wars. What still needs to be considered is the British administration of Corsica from 1794 to 1796. It was not merely an attempt to implement British constitutionalism within the island. Rather, the idea of an 'experiment' implied the creation of a completely new system: they were not merely recreating another version of British constitutional government. The Anglo-Corsican constitution was unique, and in some ways superior to the contemporary British constitution. The Anglo-Corsican constitution needs to be re-examined, and placed within the proper context of constitutional history. Gregory has noted the bestowal of a constitution which was "far more liberal than any granted hitherto to a British possession".²² Gregory linked the Anglo-Corsican constitution to the later concepts of the British commonwealth and the Dominions. However, it was the unique situation of Corsica that led the British administrators to adopt an equally unique constitution for the island, based upon the islands own circumstances. Why was Corsica given such a 'liberal' constitution? The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom is the centrepiece of this thesis. I will examine how this unique Kingdom and constitution were formed and adopted.

20 Desmond Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock: A History of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom, and its role in Britain's Mediterranean Strategy during the Revolutionary War, (1793-1797)* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1985), 43.

21 Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock*, 44.

22 Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock*, 11.

The argument of the thesis will in part focus on the shaping of British identity during the eighteenth-century. How were British relations with the external world shaped, and what did the British people think about themselves? Linda Colley's book *Britons: Forging the nation 1707-1837* (1992) argues that Britain defined themselves as protestants, "struggling for survival against the world's foremost Catholic power",²³ France. Colley argues that protestantism was "long at the core of British national identity".²⁴ This protestant world-view gave many Britons a belief that they were a "distinct and chosen people", which persisted long after the Battle of Waterloo".²⁵ Protestantism played a major role in forging the distinct British patriotism that emerged during the eighteenth century. The wars against France after 1689 played a 'significant' role in terms "of national formation".²⁶ France was the "embodiment of the catholic 'other' which Britons had been taught to fear since the reformation in the sixteenth century".²⁷ This played a major role in developing British patriotism. However, Colley makes it clear that men and women became patriots "in order to advertise their prominence in the community, or out of ambition for state or imperial employment".²⁸ Britain was first and foremost a commercial empire; profit was the primary motivator. Colley argues that some during the eighteenth century feared that "British identity was too dependent on recurrent protestant wars, commercial success and imperial conquest".²⁹

Were the recurrent protestant wars during the eighteenth century the primary factor in forging British patriotism? Tony Claydon's more recent work *Europe and the making of England, 1660-1760* (2007) follows on from Colley's argument. Claydon similarly argues that Britons primarily "saw themselves as a protestant people: a Christian nation chosen by God to uphold the true religion".³⁰ He ends his book at 1760, as he believes this was the point when Protestantism "no longer shaped public discussion as

23 Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*, 5.

24 Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*, 369.

25 Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*, 368.

26 Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*, 368.

27 Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*, 368.

28 Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*, 371.

29 Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*, 375.

30 Tony Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England 1660-1760*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5.

consistently as they once had”.³¹ The rise of Prussia and Russia challenged the protestant foreign policy of Britain. Frederick the Great’s Prussia “put expansion above religious loyalty”, whilst Russia was neither protestant or Catholic. The Ottoman Turks’ steady decline during the eighteenth century “blunted any sense of a united Christendom”.³² Claydon argues that “security” would be placed “above confession”.³³ Andrew Thompson, in his book *Britain, Hanover and the Protestant Interest, 1688-1756* (2006) agrees with Claydon’s prognosis that the ‘protestant interest’ did not affect British diplomacy as much following 1760. Thompson similarly argues that Frederick the Great (1712-1786) “undermined the link between the balance of power, the Protestant interest and universal monarchy”.³⁴ What then replaced protestantism as the main national identity of Britain? Claydon notes a change in intellectual fashion, that affected Britain after 1750; namely the popularity of Montesquieu’s famous book, the *Spirit of the laws* (1748). Montesquieu’s book brought to the fore the “importance of government, culture or belief rooted in material factors”.³⁵ Montesquieu discussed the nature of British government, and more importantly, British liberty. Montesquieu argued that, contrary to all other nations, Britain’s “constitution has political liberty for its direct purpose”.³⁶ How did Montesquieu come to this conclusion?

What did liberty entail for eighteenth-century Britons? As Rachel Hammersley has noted, many British writers stressed the importance of liberty, but were “less forthcoming in defining exactly what they meant by it”.³⁷ Modern British liberties, can be traced back to the constitution adopted in the Glorious Revolution in 1688-1689. The Glorious Revolution enshrined the protestant succession, ensuring that Britain would remain a protestant country. 1689 also saw the beginning of the wars against Louis XIV and France in general. The new British constitution, forged during the Glorious Revolution, adopted many of the measures associated with British liberty,

31 Tony Claydon, *The Making of England*, 357.

32 Tony Claydon, *The Making of England*, 358.

33 Tony Claydon, *The Making of England*, 359.

34 Andrew Thompson, *Britain, Hanover and the Protestant interest, 1688-1756*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), 230.

35 Tony Claydon, *The Making of England*, 361.

36 Charles-Louis de Secondat Baron Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the laws*, tr. Anne Cohler, (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 2011), 156.

37 Rachel Hammersley, *The English Republican Tradition and Eighteenth Century France*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 16.

such as the Bill of Rights and the Toleration Act which were both legislated in 1689. The lapsing of the licensing act in 1694 was also an under-recognised moment in defining British liberties, for it enabled the development of a free press. British liberty was essentially neo-Roman, and was mainly concerned with “the protection of basic civil liberties, such as freedom of speech, the protection of private property, and freedom from arbitrary arrest”.³⁸ There was also an emphasis upon religious liberties, that became entwined with civil liberties.

Perhaps the greatest espousal of British liberties came from the famous *Cato's Letters*, written by the writers John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon. *Cato's Letters* were a series of essays written to the *London Journal*, between 1720 and 1723 in the context of the collapse of the South Sea company. Gordon later published the letters as a collection in 1753. Within the preface, Gordon commented that “these letters were translated for the service of liberty in general”.³⁹ Cato (95-46 BCE) epitomized Roman Republican ideals and liberty; he was the arch enemy of the ‘tyrannical’ Julius Caesar (100-44 BCE). *Cato's Letters* idolized British liberties, “where the constitution is so poised and tempered, and the administration so disposed and divided into proper channels”.⁴⁰ Here Trenchard and Gordon spoke of the balance of power, enshrined in the British constitution. Montesquieu believed that Britain would eventually lose its liberty, when “the legislative power is more corrupt than executive power”.⁴¹ Corruption was the great enemy of both Trenchard and Gordon. They used Rome as an example of a ‘free’ state, which fell victim to “corruption” and impiety”. This ‘corruption’ of the state led to civil wars and the eventual death of the Roman Republic.⁴² Trenchard and Gordon firmly believed that “the good of the governed being the sole end of government”.⁴³ *Cato's Letters* were primarily aimed at the British establishment following the débâcle of the collapse of the South Sea company. Trenchard and Gordon reminded the MPs that power in a free state was a “trust”,

38 Hammersley, *The English Republican Tradition*, 16.

39 *Cato's Letters: Or Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and other Important Subjects*, vol. I, (London: Printed for W. Wilkins, 1753), xxvi

40 *Cato's Letters*, vol. I, 91.

41 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 166.

42 *Cato's Letters*, vol. I, 118.

43 *Cato's Letters*, vol. I, 184.

conferred by all to one or a few, to maintain security and “pursue the interest of all”.⁴⁴ Ultimately, they praised the “inestimable blessing of liberty”, which was the “parent of virtue, pleasure, plenty, and security; and tis innocent as well as lovely”.⁴⁵

Liberty was an important theme for many Britons during the eighteenth century. Many subsequent writers echoed the thoughts and ideals of Trenchard and Gordon. *A Critical Review of the Liberties of British Subjects* (1750) summed up the intrinsic link between Britain and liberty:

“If an unconfined and constrained love of liberty constitutes the distinguishing characteristic of a free Briton, as every Englishman demands, and every antagonist allows; whatever concerns liberty, whether it tends to promote or suppress the cause, in nations near or remote, as well as at home, must in some degree affect every true Englishman, every generous soul”.⁴⁶

Two major themes emerge from this particular passage. The first was the idea that every Briton should have an ‘unconfined’ love of liberty, ‘as every Englishman demands’. Britain was formed after the union with Scotland in 1707. The union was dominated by England. Both Scotland, Wales, and to a lesser extent Ireland, were meant to adhere to English principles, and ideals of liberty. When referencing ‘Britain’ throughout this work, this predominately means England, although many Scottish and Irish writers do feature predominately within this work. James Boswell was Scottish, yet adhered firmly to Anglo-British liberties. Colin Kidd in his article *North Britishness and the Nature of Eighteenth Century British Patriotisms* (1996) expands further upon this phenomenon. ‘Patriotism’ had not yet gathered an ethnocentric meaning; it was associated with “ideals and practices which held universal appeal”.⁴⁷ The universalist conception of patriotism was closely related to the English ideal of self-government. More importantly, the dominant ideologies of eighteenth century England’s ‘provinces’ tended to “emulate patriotism concerning with the extension of the achievements of English exceptionalism within the wider British world”.⁴⁸

44 *Cato’s Letters*, vol. I, 184.

45 *Cato’s Letters*, vol. I, 191.

46 *A Critical Review of the Liberties of British Subjects*, (London: Printed for R. Watkins, 1750), 3.

47 Colin Kidd, “North Britishness and the Nature of Eighteenth Century British patriotisms”, *The Historical Journal*, Vol 39, No 2, (June 1996), 361-382, 362.

48 Kidd, “North Britishness”, 362.

This was why it was easy for Boswell, a Scotsman, to adhere so heavily to the English ideals of liberty in his *Account of Corsica* (1768).

The second major theme to emerge from the aforementioned passage, was the idea that the cause of liberty across the globe ought to ‘affect every true Englishman’. It was this idealism which led to the belief that Corsica and Britain were bound together as fellow isles of liberty. Britons during the eighteenth century believed themselves to be a unique nation. This did not stem solely from the belief that they were ‘Gods chosen people’. Many firmly believed that the British constitution was the greatest, most superior in the world. Trenchard and Gordon called Britain “the best republick in the world, with a prince at the head of it”.⁴⁹ As Hammersley has noted, British ‘commonwealthmen’ had a certain “reverence for the small republican governments of antiquity, with a recognition that such governments simply were not viable in the different circumstances of modern Europe”.⁵⁰ The conditions of a mixed/balanced system of government in Britain “offered the next-best thing”; republican elements within a monarchical framework, with political liberty protected.⁵¹ Britain’s constitution was seen to incorporate the best features of republican and monarchical forms of government. It was the reason why Trenchard and Gordon could quote passages from that “excellent” Republican writer Algernon Sidney (1623-1683), and yet remain fervent supporters of the British monarchy.⁵² This fine balance and perfect harmony “between the civil liberty of the people, the privileges of the nobility and clergy, and the prince’s prerogative”, led the British pamphlet *British Liberties, or the Free-born Subject’s Inheritance* (1766), to confidently assert that Britain had “the best species of constitution that could possibly be imagined by man”.⁵³

The belief in the superiority of the British constitution translated directly into British foreign affairs. Brendan Simms has commented that there was a direct link between domestic liberty and the ‘balance of power’ and the right to intervene.⁵⁴ This meant the right to intervene within other states affairs wherever ‘liberty’ was believed to be

49 *Cato’s Letters*, vol. II, 28.

50 Hammersley, *The English republican tradition*, 78.

51 Hammersley, *The English republican tradition*, 78.

52 *Cato’s Letters*, vol. II, 28

53 *British Liberties, or the Free-born Subject’s Inheritance*, (London: Printed by H.Woodfall and W.Strahan, 1766), xiv

threatened. British ideals of liberty affected foreign policy far more during the second half of the eighteenth century. This will be the other main focus for the thesis; to study the foreign policy of Britain, particularly within Europe. Britain after the Seven Years War (1756-1763) turned away from active intervention in Europe. Thompson argued that the emphasis “on the superiority of the British constitution in both its secular and ecclesiastical forms served to stress difference, rather than supranational confessional solidarity”.⁵⁵ For Thompson, the decline of ‘protestant interest’ within foreign affairs led directly to a discourse of ‘difference’ between Britain and continental Europe, which was reinforced by a “Whiggish historical account of English historical exceptionalism”.⁵⁶ However, those writing about Corsica during the eighteenth-century attempted to promote British intervention on the island, in order to protect Corsican liberties. Corsica was used as an example by writers who attempted to promote British activity in continental Europe after 1763.

One of the most prominent promoters of an active British foreign policy in Europe was Edmund Burke (1729-1797), a member of parliament and an author, who is most well known for writing the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). In an address to the House of Commons on the 8th of November 1768, Burke argued that the recent French invasion of Corsica was an affront to British interests; “Corsica naked I dread not, but Corsica a Province of France is terrible to me”.⁵⁷ Burke argued that “this country used to take part” in the affairs of Europe.⁵⁸ He believed it was the duty of the house to “superintend every action of its neighbours”.⁵⁹ Corsica was used as an example by Burke to illustrate the dangers of “that Dreadful Scorpion” (the Bourbon powers: France and Spain), which was “going to occupy more space in our horizon”.⁶⁰ The case study of Corsica can help map developments in British foreign policy. In particular, the

54 Brendan Simms, “A False principle in the law of nations: Burke, state sovereignty [German] liberty, and intervention in the Age of Westphalia”, in *Humanitarian intervention: A History*, ed. Brendan Simms and D.J.B Trim, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 92.

55 Thompson, *The Protestant interest*, 237.

56 Thompson, *The Protestant interest*, 237.

57 Edmund Burke, *The Writings and speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. II, ed. Paul Langford, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 98.

58 Burke, *The Writings and speeches*, 99.

59 Burke, *The Writings and speeches*, 99.

60 Burke, *The Writings and speeches*, 99.

debates concerning British foreign policy following 1763, when it became a choice between Europe or America?⁶¹

We can understand the perceptions Britain had of the world through examining her relations with Corsica. Protestantism seemingly did not affect British ideology as much during the second half of the eighteenth century. This was highlighted by their relations with Corsica. Corsica was an almost entirely catholic country, but the Corsicans catholic religion was rarely talked about by the majority of British writers. I aim to situate my argument in the context of the works Claydon and Colley. Through the case study of Corsica, I will argue that British attitudes changed around this time: they no longer saw themselves as the protectors of Protestantism, but as advocates and defenders of liberty. More importantly, British liberty also meant the adoption of the British commercial system. British liberty entailed free trade for all. Britain was the most superior commercial state in the world. Becoming a part of the British empire enabled access to all the economic benefits that came with it. For example, it was argued that British liberty had helped to develop Scotland commercially. The counter example was Ireland, where the British 'project' was less successful. British notions of liberty were arguably a sham, or a cover for the mercantile system. Ireland for example did not benefit from Britain's commercial empire. The idea of British liberties was simply a way in which Britain represented themselves; it became the Realpolitik of the British empire. I will study how this belief in the superiority of British liberties translated directly into foreign affairs. More specifically, would Corsica follow the Scottish or Irish model if they became a part of the British commercial empire?

The thesis will study the relations between Britain and Corsica from the period 1728-1796. In order to encompass this large expanse of time, the thesis is subdivided into four main chapters. These are as follows: Chapter 1 "Britain and Corsica: the development of British opinion and policy on Corsica, 1728-1768"; Chapter 2 "The Corsican Crisis in British politics 1768-1769"; Chapter 3 "Paoli in Britain 1769-1789"; Chapter 4 "The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom 1794-1796: An 'Experiment' in British constitutional government". Chapters 1 and 3 generally deal with larger time periods

⁶¹ See Jeremy Black's book *America or Europe? British foreign policy 1739-63*, (London: UCL Press, 1998)

and act as ‘bridges’ to the two main events to occur in the relations between Britain and Corsica; the Corsican Crisis (1768-1769) and the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom (1794-1796), which are the subjects for Chapters 2 and 4 respectively. Chapters 2 and 4 are more condensed, dealing with their respective events. The thesis analyses the relations between Britain and Corsica collectively; the Corsican crisis is linked to and contrasted with the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. In order to understand these events, the relations between Britain and Corsica during the eighteenth century need to be studied as a whole.

The first chapter will study the relations between Britain and Corsica from 1728-1768. 1728 saw the beginning of the great Corsican revolt against some four hundred years of Genoese rule. The chapter will provide an overview of the different British writings published on Corsica during this period. This will include the main newspapers and pamphlets with articles concerning Corsica. This chapter will also showcase the early relations Britain had with the Corsican rebels. Why did Britain start interacting with an island with which they had had no previous relations? More important were the intellectual concepts of Corsica that came out from this period. The most influential writings of Corsica were the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Catherine Macaulay and James Boswell. The chapter will explore their works on Corsica in detail. It will showcase in particular how the works of Rousseau and Boswell became the basis for all British knowledge on Corsica. They provided the intellectual basis of ideas concerning the island. The chapter places Boswell’s *Account of Corsica* (1768) at the centre of discussions. Boswell’s book was the single most important publication on Corsica in Britain. The chapter will restore Boswell’s *Account of Corsica* to its proper place of importance within eighteenth century intellectual debates.

The second chapter is an in-depth analysis of the Corsican crisis (1768-1769). The French invasion of the island provided the catalyst of mass British interest of Corsica during this period. How would Britain react? The country was split between those supporting intervention, and those against. There was a mass of British publications concerning Corsica during this period. The vast majority of the British literate classes supported the Corsican rebels. The chapter will explore how the Corsican crisis

influenced British politics. The opposition to government became associated with aiding the Corsicans with money and supplies. The Corsican crisis also became immersed within the broader debates upon British foreign policy following the Seven Years War. Was Britain's failure to intervene against the French in Corsica, the first sign of the decline of the first British empire? The chapter will also explore the reasons why the divided British cabinet did little to aid the Corsican rebels, despite the mass public outcry of support.

The third chapter will provide a bridge between the Corsican crisis 1768-1769 and the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom 1794-1796. This chapter will study the impact the Corsican leader Pasquale Paoli (1725-1807) made when in exile in England. There was a surprising reversal of attitudes to Paoli in Britain; the government became the supporters and benefactors of Paoli whilst the opposition turned against him. The chapter will bring to light how this situation came about. Debates upon Paoli were also linked to Britain's precarious foreign policy after 1763. Where should Britain's interests lie; Europe or America? Britain's failure to aid Corsica was seen as a sign of their isolation from European power politics. The chapter will also ask why Paoli's attempt to gain British aid for Corsica failed: despite remaining twenty years in exile, no support was forthcoming for the Corsican exiles in Britain. Why was Corsica not a strategic target during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783), especially after France went to war with Britain in 1778? Ultimately, Paoli's exile in Britain can only be considered a failure. Only with the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, did Paoli's restoration to Corsica become a reality. Why was the British government so reluctant to aid the Corsican exiles during this period?

The final chapter is the crux of the thesis, and looks into where British interest in Corsica became reality; the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom (1794-1796). This chapter will study how previous British interest in and ideas of Corsica directly influenced the formation of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. The chapter also places the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom within the context of the French Revolutionary Wars (1792-1799). It was only within this wartime situation, that a British attempt on Corsica was made. One of the main focuses of this chapter is the uniquely legislated Anglo-Corsican

constitution. The constitution was distinctively formulated for Corsica, and was unparalleled in the constitutional history of Britain and their empire. The chapter will explore all the aspects of the constitution, which appeared to be shaped by the previous notions and ideas Britons had of the island. The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom also provides a unique insight into British foreign policy: Corsica was the largest territory in Europe to be conquered by Britain during the eighteenth century. The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom provides an insight into how Britain would rule any European territories during this period. However, the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was also uniquely formed for Corsica. Perhaps the most important question to ask is why did the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom fail? The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom certainly ended any thoughts of a union between Britain and Corsica. The main question to be asked is why Corsicans seemingly looked to France rather than Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century?

Britain and Corsica: the development of British opinion and policy on Corsica, 1728-1768

In 1762 Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) pondered in his famous publication *The Social contract*, the impossibility “of finding the simplicity of nature linked with the needs of society”.⁶² It was difficult to find truly natural ‘conditions’ in modern societies. This explained the lack of well-constituted states and Rousseau’s pessimism about the future of the world. There was one exception:

“There is one country left in Europe capable of receiving legislation; it is the island of Corsica. The valour and steadfastness with which this brave people was able to recover and defend its freedom would amply deserve that some wise man teach it to preserve it. I rather suspect that this small island will one day astound Europe”.⁶³

Rousseau’s glowing description of Pasquale Paoli’s Corsican Republic helped to bring Corsica to the forefront of knowledge in European discussion. James Boswell (1740-1795) followed the interest of Rousseau with the publication of what became a renowned book; *An Account of Corsica, the journal of a tour of that island and memoirs of Pascal Paoli* (1768). Boswell, a relatively unknown Scottish writer and biographer at the time, visited the island in 1765. Boswell’s account was very popular upon its release, and helped to start his career as an author. Corsica became a major topic of curiosity within Britain. The main subject of interest for many British readers was that Corsica had become a democratic nation, built upon the foundations of ‘liberty’. The ideal of liberty was a central theme for eighteenth-century British writers. The result of the British Civil Wars (1642-1651) and the Glorious Revolution (1688) during the seventeenth-century had given many Britons an intrinsic belief that their nation was the most ‘free’ on earth and superior to any other. Other nations striving for the same future were viewed with enthusiastic interest. This was most evident after the French invasion of Corsica, in the same year Boswell’s book was released. The invasion precipitated a huge public outcry; war with France was only barely avoided. Could this ideal of shared liberty compel a nation to war? What made Corsica unique for Britain? Should Britain embrace a foreign policy that defended

62 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and other later Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 78.

63 Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 78.

liberty across the globe? Should Britain act as the protector of small states, and especially those threatened by foreign tyrants?

This chapter will review the development of British perspectives on Corsica. It will begin by documenting the Corsican revolt from 1728, and will culminate with the publication of James Boswell's *Account of Corsica* in 1768. The first section will present the historiographical debates surrounding Corsica during this period. This chapter will attempt to provide a new way of understanding the Corsican revolt, from a British position and view point. The second section will then provide a contextual analysis of the connections between Britain and Corsica up until 1750. The third section will study the links made between ancient Republicanism and Corsica. In particular, the works of both Rousseau and Catherine Macaulay (1731-1791) will be studied, in order to understand why they viewed Corsica as a new modern Rome. The final section is a case study of Boswell's famous *Account of Corsica*. What action did Boswell want Britain to take concerning Corsica? Did he hope for Corsica to become a part of the British Empire, or perhaps merely for Britain to establish a protectorate over the island? The central thesis question for this review is how did Corsica become so important for Britain? There were arguably many similarities between Britain and Corsica; both were islands fighting for liberty against French tyranny. The idea that the Corsicans were struggling for 'liberty' was something repeatedly emphasised by Boswell, in his attempts to have Britain intervene on the island. Or perhaps British interest in Corsica was merely for its strategic location in the Mediterranean? I will attempt to answer these questions within this chapter.

Historiographical debates surrounding Britain and Corsica

There are two overarching themes concerning Britain's interest in Corsica during the eighteenth-century. The first focuses on the major similarities between Britain and Corsica; particularly the idea of 'liberty' which drew interest from British readers. Franco Venturi's *The end of the old regime in Europe 1768-1776* (1989), describes that the Corsican revolt was "a struggle of poor against rich, of mountaineers against city dwellers".⁶⁴ The Corsican struggle became a symbol that expressed "the growing

⁶⁴ Franco Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe 1768-1776*, tr. R.Burr Litchfield, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1989), xv.

contrast between virtue and corruption, between liberty and military and government coercion”.⁶⁵ It was this ‘struggle’ for liberty that attracted the attention of Rousseau, Boswell, and even Catherine II of Russia. The Corsicans seemed markedly similar to the ancient Romans. The Romans under the Republic were traditionally viewed as poor but virtuous citizens who would conquer the world. Venturi argues that within Britain, there was a general enthusiasm for the Corsican struggle for political liberty.

John Symonds, an English professor at Cambridge, was noted as an example of someone who supported the Corsican revolt. Symonds “judged the regime of Pasquale Paoli the second freest in the world after England”.⁶⁶ Again the link between British and Corsican liberties was emphasised. Venturi has also noted that during the Corsican ‘revolution’, there was an “absence of any active or coherent English policy in the Mediterranean”.⁶⁷ This was certainly the case, as illustrated by the hot and cold support for Theodore von Neuhoff during the 1730s and 1740s. Whilst British government activity was incoherent in regard to Corsica, general English interest in the island was steadfast in supporting the Corsican rebel cause. What kind of people in England supported the Corsican revolt? First of all, the people in question would need to have been literate at least, in order to read any information concerning Corsica. The second aspect was the ability to financially support the rebels. John Symonds was a typical example of this ‘class’ of people. They had the enlightenment ideal of liberty at the heart of their ideas and beliefs. It is however difficult to truly ascertain how many people in Britain actually supported the Corsican revolt, but the continual newspaper reports on the subject suggest a certain amount of British interest in Corsican affairs.

The intrinsic ‘link’ between Britain and Corsica is an aspect studied by Peter France, in his article *Western European civilisation and its mountain frontiers 1750-1850* (1985). France described that within eighteenth-century conceptualisations, there was the idea of the barbarian savage or ‘the other’. European writings were “full of the opposition between the rational civilised self and the wild other”.⁶⁸ Corsica fitted the image of a

⁶⁵ Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime*, xv.

⁶⁶ Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime*, xv.

⁶⁷ Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime*, xvi.

⁶⁸ Peter France, “Western European Civilisation and its Mountain Frontiers 1750-1850”, *History of European ideas*, (London: Taylor and Francis, 1985), 297.

‘wild’ mountainous frontier, similar to the Scottish Highlands. Within Scotland, there was a question of revenge. This came about due to the proscriptions that followed the Jacobite rebellion of 1745-1746. France believed there was a ‘bridge’ to the case of Corsica, which was “home of the primitive vendetta”.⁶⁹ The Vendetta captured the imagination of a ‘civilised’ Europe. The highlanders and Corsicans were associated with the ‘savage’, in contrast to the rest of Europe, which viewed itself as a modern commercial society. Boswell’s ‘Tour of Corsica’ “fired enlightened opinion for the cause of the brave and primitive population of a mountainous island”.⁷⁰ His heroic portrait of the freedom-loving islanders drew upon “the pastoral age of gold and the manly ideal of Sparta”.⁷¹ The Corsicans lived in the ‘golden age’ described in the Second part of Rousseau’s ‘Discourse on inequality’. Rousseau’s golden mean was “preserving the ‘manly’ virtues and ancient simplicity of freedom-loving mountain people while cultivating the arts of civilisation”.⁷² Boswell attempted to drum up support for this future. France believes that this ‘mythologizing representation’ of the Corsicans made them an object of fascination for many ‘enlightened’ Europeans.

The other major theme concerning the relationship between Britain and Corsica was the strategic implications involved. This idea particularly focused on the importance of Corsica for British interests in the Mediterranean. Jeremy Black’s book *Debating foreign policy in Eighteenth century Britain* (2011) describes that the Corsican ‘issue’ “touched chords in British concern about maritime strength”.⁷³ Black argues that in 1738, when the French first sent troops to Corsica, domestic criticism of the British ministry was “relatively restrained”.⁷⁴ This was due to the growing tensions between Britain and Spain, which culminated with war in 1739. 1768 was different; when the French purchased the island, “more was known about Corsica by then and it had developed into a major topic in public discussion”.⁷⁵ This ‘public discussion’ “encompassed politicians, printed opinion, especially James Boswell’s account of his

69 France, “Western European Civilisation” 303.

70 France, “Western European Civilisation”, 303.

71 France, “Western European Civilisation”, 303.

72 France, “Western European Civilisation”, 303.

73 Jeremy Black, *Debating Foreign Policy in Eighteenth Century Britain*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 177.

74 Black, *Debating Foreign Policy*, 177.

75 Black, *Debating Foreign Policy*, 177.

tour to the island, which also served as the basis for newspaper articles and fashionable opinion”.⁷⁶ What all the major historians agree upon is Boswell’s importance in making the island a major issue within British politics. The question for this particular chapter is how did this ‘crisis’ come about? Black argues that the British government was ‘aware’ of the strategic importance of Corsica. In 1768 the government “pressed France not to annex” the island, but with little result.⁷⁷ Otherwise the government’s response was limited. The Corsican crisis was for Black, the first ‘challenge’ faced by the British Empire following the Seven Years War (1756-1763). However, the ‘public outburst’ over the Corsican issue was a clear indication that Corsica was not merely a strategic concern. Corsican liberties were identifiable to the British ideals of ‘liberty’ and freedom; failure over Corsica meant a loss for the cause of ‘liberty’.

Brendan Simm’s book *Three victories and a defeat* (2007) also discusses the strategic implications arising from Corsica’s annexation by France. Simms argues that in the five years following 1768, “a number of bastions across Europe- Corsica, Sweden and Poland- had fallen”.⁷⁸ All these were widely perceived to have “profound implications also for Britain’s naval security”.⁷⁹ Again, Corsica’s important strategic position in the Mediterranean came to the fore. Simms argues that previously nobody “paid very much attention to the long Corsican rebellion against their Genoese occupiers”.⁸⁰ The first section of this chapter brings forward evidence contrary to this statement by Simms. There were many news stories and publications in Britain devoted to Corsica prior to 1768. For Simms, the annexation of Corsica is “a serious blow to Britain’s position in the western Mediterranean, and reduced the security of her bases in Gibraltar, and particularly Minorca”.⁸¹ Simms concludes that this loss “symbolized and hastened Britain’s general European decline”; she found herself outside of the major alliance systems.⁸² This would precipitate the ‘crisis’ during the American war 1775-1783, when Britain fought a coalition of European powers as well as the American

⁷⁶ Black, *Debating Foreign Policy*, 177.

⁷⁷ Black, *Debating Foreign Policy*, 178.

⁷⁸ Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire 1714-1783*, (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 555.

⁷⁹ Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat*, 555.

⁸⁰ Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat*, 556.

⁸¹ Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat*, 557.

⁸² Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat*, 557.

revolutionists on their own. However, to view the Corsican crisis primarily in the realm of ‘great power’ politics, loses sight of the real forces behind the general outcry against the French annexation of Corsica in 1768.

History of Corsica and Genoa up until 1720

Corsica has been dominated by a number of invaders throughout its history. These include the Etruscans, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals, Ostrogoths, Byzantines, Lombards, Saracens, Aragonese, Pisans and even the Papacy. Corsica constantly changed hands throughout the centuries, lacking an effective unifying authority to rule the island. The Genoese Republic secured possession of the island during the mid fifteenth century, ruling until 1768. France briefly gained possession of the island from 1553-1559 during the last bout of the Italian wars (1494-1559).

Although subsequently returned to Genoa at the end of the war, French rule was never entirely forgotten. Italian historian Franco Venturi has written that Genoa was a city “that had been for centuries a centre and symbol of seafaring cosmopolitanism”.⁸³ The Genoese Republic was at her height during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. However, she suffered relative decline during subsequent centuries. The historian Thomas Kirk in his book *Genoa and the sea 1559-1684* (2005) argues that this decline was due to Genoese reliance on foreign fleets during the seventeenth century, especially Spain. Kirk believes that as “the big European monarchies grew more able at tapping their vast resources, the city-state became outclassed”.⁸⁴ Other mercantile powers, such as the Dutch and the English became the dominant trading powers in the Mediterranean. Genoa was never able to compete with these global commercial powers. Genoa was reduced to being of “little more than regional importance by the late seventeenth century”.⁸⁵ When studying the history of Corsica, perhaps the most important note of interest for this chapter is that Britain had no connection to the island prior to 1720. This situation would change drastically during the eighteenth century, mainly due to the Corsican revolt.

⁸³ Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime*, xv.

⁸⁴ Thomas Kirk, *Genoa and the Sea 1559-1684: Policy and Power in an Early Modern Maritime Republic*, (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 197.

⁸⁵ Kirk, *Genoa and the Sea*, 197.

With the decline of Genoa, Corsica became one of the only remaining symbols of imperial prestige. However, Thadd Hall, a historian writing in 1971, has noted that the desperate attempts to hold the island were “another symptom of the Republics decline”.⁸⁶ Hall argues that the Genoese viewed Corsica “as a colony and did not attempt to make the island part of the Republic”.⁸⁷ The majority of eighteenth-century commentators on Corsica agreed that Genoese rule of the island was inefficient, oppressive and uninspired. The great Corsican revolt that broke out in 1728 was the first of a series of rebellions to erupt. British interest in the island only began to materialise when a number of newspapers started to contain information concerning the revolt. Fighting on Corsica was at times the only war of note occurring in Europe; it therefore made interesting news. News on Corsica appeared sporadically in a number of newspapers, usually within the ‘foreign’ sections. The news was typically gathered from post received from both Holland and France. However, it was up to the editors to decide which articles of news made the papers. Information on Corsica was often repeated and shared in a number of different newspapers. The news articles on Corsica were usually brief and sometimes contradictory.

British newspapers began to report on Corsica as early as 1731 with the intervention of Imperialist troops on the island. The ‘Imperialists’ referred to the Holy Roman Empire. The Holy Roman Empire was a confederation of German states dominated by the Emperor in Vienna. The 13 November edition of the *Daily Advertiser* reported that the Genoese minister at Vienna desired a reinforcement of Imperial troops in Corsica “to subdue sooner the rebels there”.⁸⁸ The paper also reported that the Genoese minister had complained ‘loudly’ to the British ministers of state in Vienna. He described that “several neighbouring nations had furnished the rebels with large quantities of ammunition and provision”.⁸⁹ Which neighbouring nations had furnished the supplies remained unknown; Britain was certainly a suspect. This was a typical example of a British newspaper article devoted to the Corsican revolt; the news was based on conjecture or ‘advice’ gained from imported foreign mail. This was the first instance of

⁸⁶ Thadd Hall, *France and the Eighteenth Century Corsican Question*, (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 6.

⁸⁷ Hall, *France and the Corsican Question*, 6.

⁸⁸ “Mail from Germany”, *Daily Advertiser*, 13 November, 1731; Issue 244.

⁸⁹ *Daily Advertiser*, Nov 13, 1731.

British interest in the Corsican revolt. It raised the question of Britain selling arms to the Corsicans for profit rather than any other motive.

The History of Corsica 1730-1748- first British involvement

With the increase in newspaper coverage on the island, two anonymous publications appeared in 1739 and 1743 respectively. These two sources provided for British readers a far more detailed picture of events on Corsica. I will now give a brief overview of these documents. There are two important questions to ask before looking at these sources. The first question is why study these writings? Both were published as books in several editions, and were extensively advertised in many British newspapers. Entire sections were printed in several British newspapers. The 6 November 1746 edition of the *General Advertiser* for example contained large segments of the 1739 publication, *A General account and description of the island of Corsica*.⁹⁰ Some seven years after its publication, the book was still referred to as a source of authority on Corsica. Both sources helped to define British opinions and ideas of the island. The second question to ponder was why these works were published anonymously? The main reason was due to the royal proclamation issued on the 24 July 1736. Boswell in his *Account of Corsica* noted some twenty years after, that this proclamation (which was still in force) was attained by the Genoese minister in London. It prohibited “any of his majesty’s subjects from furnishing provisions or assistance to the malcontents of Corsica”.⁹¹ To publish any works concerning the Corsican Revolt was somewhat dangerous; anonymity remained the only option for any interested in the island. What can be gathered from the issuing of this royal proclamation was that certain British subjects were already assisting the Corsican rebels. The two anonymous publications will bring more light to the actions of these certain Britons’ during the 1730s.

The first pamphlet that will be studied is *A General account and description of the island of Corsica* (1739). *A General account of Corsica* attempted to provide a more reliable account of events occurring on the island. Previously, knowledge of the Corsican

⁹⁰ *General Advertiser*, (London, England), 6 November 1746; Issue 3754

⁹¹ James Boswell, *An Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour of that Island and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli*, 4th ed. (Dublin: Printed for J. Exshaw, 1768), 76.

revolt was dependent “upon Gazettes, and accidental information”.⁹² With the increase of coverage in the newspapers, Corsica had become a “natural curiosity”.⁹³ The writer claimed that the information gathered was from the “first reports”; these had been “well attested, at least confirmed over and over in the publick accounts”.⁹⁴ The writer was still reliant on similar documents to those used by British newspapers. Within the preface, the writer claimed that the purpose of the document was not to argue for or against the Corsican Revolt. This sentiment was contradicted by the rest of the preface. The preface described that Corsica had been “long inured to a state of subjection and slavery, under an oppressive commonwealth”.⁹⁵ The late appearance of ‘publick spirit’ in the natives of Corsica made them “stand distinguished in the annals of the present age, [and] has turned the eyes of all Europe towards that small spot of ground”.⁹⁶ The writer clearly favoured the Corsican cause, which had become a well known topic across Europe. The ‘natural curiosity’ in the island of Corsica was the appearance of ‘liberty’. This was a recurring theme of interest for many British writers on Corsica during the eighteenth century, for whom there was an intrinsic ‘link’ between British and Corsican liberties.

With the beginning of the Corsican revolt in 1728, the writer described that the Genoese had given the Corsicans ‘significant’ occasion for insurrection. The Genoese viceroys of the island, during their commissions, advanced “their private fortunes, on the spoils of their fellow creatures”.⁹⁷ The viceroys only had a two year commission on the island and were usually from the lower strata of Genoese aristocracy. Their commission on Corsica was an opportunity to make easy money. The Corsicans first declared that they wanted a king of their own to reside among them. They opposed the authority of the Genoese Doge, who was also crowned King of Corsica when elected. The writer ‘applauded’ the constancy of the Corsicans in this sentiment, “as every brave and virtuous people must be thought to deserve”.⁹⁸ These qualities of the

⁹² *A General Account and Description of the Island of Corsica*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for C. Corbett, 1739), A3.

⁹³ *General Account of Corsica*, A3.

⁹⁴ *General Account of Corsica*, A4.

⁹⁵ *General Account of Corsica*, A2.

⁹⁶ *General Account of Corsica*, A2.

⁹⁷ *General Account of Corsica*, 9.

⁹⁸ *General Account of Corsica*, 10.

Corsicans alluded to those had by the ancients, such as the Romans or Spartans. This connection would later be brought up more vividly by both Rousseau and Boswell. By 1731, the Corsicans had almost reduced the entire island to complete obedience. However, this changed when Imperialist troops were sent to the island in 1731. Genoa was still officially a fief of the Holy Roman Empire. Therefore the Emperor placed Genoa under his protection. By 1733 there were some 12,000 Imperialist troops on the island. The Corsicans were able to procure 'honourable' terms by laying down their arms. The Imperialist commander recognised the difficulty of defeating a people "who took up arms in defence of their liberties".⁹⁹ The author was attempting to have English readers recognize the strength of liberty when founding a nation. This was the true aim of the author when writing this book. The author was attempting to change the preconceived conceptions of Britain as the defender of Protestantism.

Linda Colley's book *Britons: forging the nation 1707-1837* (1992) argues that "Protestantism lay at the core of British national identity" throughout the eighteenth-century.¹⁰⁰ *A General account of Corsica* was one of the earlier works attempting to change the idea that protestantism was the main characteristic of Britain's national identity. Religion was no longer the main battle line for nations in Europe; liberty would become the new source of conflict. By writing the history of Corsica, the author hoped for readers to identify the similarities between British and Corsican histories. Both were islands fighting for their liberty; Britain had 'won' their battle whilst Corsica was still engrossed in combat. When describing Corsican liberty, the writer was really talking about British liberty. The author described one event in 1735, to typify the major differences between the Corsicans and the Genoese. Genoa had raised 6000 militia to go to Corsica. The Genoese though "could get but fifty to go".¹⁰¹ Such "terror did the resolution of a brave people, struggling for liberty, strike in the breasts of a company of dastardly slaves".¹⁰² The 'bravery' of the Corsicans was contrasted to the 'slavery' of the Genoese. There could only be one victor. The illustration of a people devoted to liberty was intended for British self-understanding. This marked a

⁹⁹ *General Account of Corsica*, 19.

¹⁰⁰ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the nation 1707-1837*, (London: Pimlico, 1992), 369.

¹⁰¹ *General Account of Corsica*, 38.

¹⁰² *General Account of Corsica*, 38.

change of interest in the island from a British perspective. Liberty rather than profit became the main point of curiosity.

A General account of Corsica devoted the final passages of the book to one of the most extraordinary affairs in the history of Corsica: the arrival of Baron Theodore Von Neuhoff, later known as King Theodore I. King Theodore was the first and last king of Corsica (excluding the Doges). There was a major increase in British newspaper articles devoted to news of Theodore's activities. The *Weekly Miscellany* was one of the more prominent newspapers to dedicate articles to this subject. The 31 July 1736 edition attempted to ascertain the intentions of Theodore. They informed readers that they needed to wait longer "before we make any further observations on this important subject".¹⁰³ British interest in Corsica had reached new heights during Theodore's short reign on the island; it had now become an 'important' subject. In a matter of conjecture, British newspapers seemed far more interested in the Corsican Revolt when an important individual leader appeared. This was also apparent in the later fascination with Pasquale Paoli.

Theodore's arrival on the island on 15 March 1736 marked the first major British involvement on Corsica. Perhaps more extraordinary, as noted in *A general account of Corsica*, was that Theodore arrived on an "English vessel from Tunis", with a pass from the British consul there.¹⁰⁴ What was the intention of the British during this episode? Was this a private enterprise by the English captain, or a genuine British attempt to secure Corsica through Theodore? It was also reported that two English ships had brought supplies to the Corsicans a year earlier in 1735. *A general account of Corsica* contained a letter, later published in several British Newspapers, from Baron Neuhoff to an 'Irish Gentleman' in England, dated 12 April 1736. Theodore explained that he came aboard the Ship "Richard", commanded by a Captain Ortega. The most important note of mention in Theodore's letter was that he had made certain 'measures' "to obtain the friendship of the maritime powers".¹⁰⁵ The maritime powers referred to the two allied nations; Britain and Holland. Theodore believed that with the

103 William Webster, "Foreign affairs", *Weekly Miscellany* (1732), 31 July, 1736, Issue CLXXXVIII.

104 *General account of Corsica*, 41.

105 *General account of Corsica*, 43.

assistance of these nations, he would “be able to resist the efforts and forces of all the powers of Europe”.¹⁰⁶ Theodore alluded to the strategic importance Corsica had in the Mediterranean. Its location would enable a naval power to potentially dominate the sea routes in the Western Mediterranean.

It was unlikely that Theodore’s support came directly from the British government. Theodore’s arrival on a British ship prompted the issuing of the royal proclamation in July 1736, forbidding any British subjects from assisting the rebels of Corsica. The author of *A General account of Corsica* noted that the British King sent orders to seize the British ship that carried over Baron Neuhoff, and also called for an account from the consul of Tunis, for his part in the affair.¹⁰⁷ It can be gathered that the ‘affair’ was down to some private individuals. The issuing of the royal proclamation also suggests that certain British subjects had already been involved in aiding the Corsican rebels, especially in supplies. What stimulated these British individuals to provide aid to these rebels? The hope for profit seemed to be the primary motivator.

The reign of King Theodore was farcical in reality. His ‘reign’ lasted less than six months before he left for Leghorn, on mainland Italy in November 1736. His retreat was due to “some important affairs he had to transact in Italy, to facilitate the entire conquest of Corsica”.¹⁰⁸ He was later arrested in Holland due to some unresolved debts. However, Theodore’s arrival in Corsica on a British ship concerned the French government. The French court feared British or Spanish interference on the island; Corsica was located close to the south of France. French troops would later intervene on the island in 1738, in support of their Genoese ally. *A General account of Corsica* ended its narrative at this point. The pamphlet never advocated any British intervention on the island, in response to the French. The whole work was more of an ‘ode’ to the Corsican fight for liberty, rather than actively seeking British action in Corsica. The pamphlet was also discreetly challenging the commercial selfishness of Britain. Through her greed and exploitation of Corsica, Genoa had driven the inhabitants of the island to open revolt. The Corsicans, imbued with the spirit of liberty, would always

¹⁰⁶ *General account of Corsica*, 43.

¹⁰⁷ *General account of Corsica*, 46.

¹⁰⁸ *General Account of Corsica*, 50.

overcome the corrupt and commercial Republic of Genoa. Thus, Britain should base her foreign policy on new principles: the protection and advancement of liberty across the globe, rather than commercial greed.

The history of Theodore I King of Corsica (1743)

The second major anonymous publication to come out during the 1730s-1740s was *The history of Theodore I King of Corsica (1743)*. *The History of Theodore* wanted to provide a “genuine and impartial account of the life and adventures of so extraordinary a person as Baron Neuhoﬀ certainly is”.¹⁰⁹ The author throughout this work could barely hide their overwhelming admiration for Theodore, despite their claims of providing an ‘impartial account’. Similarly to *A general account of Corsica*, the book attempted to provide clear information of events on Corsica, which were “produced to public view”.¹¹⁰ The author praised the resolution of the Corsicans to “defend their liberties”, in order to “enjoy the blessings of society”.¹¹¹ The Genoese had previously forbade the advancement of industry and agriculture in Corsica, in order to control their commercial activities. The Corsicans, as a free nation, were no longer “resting in rocks and caves” but now had “houses and lands; from a state of indigence, they are raised to a prospect of riches”.¹¹² Liberty enabled the progression of a nation. The only way they could survive as a free nation however, was with Theodore as their king.

The History of Theodore was written during the War of the Austrian Succession (1742-1748), which defined its content. The war saw an alliance of Britain, Austria and Sardinia battle against a coalition of France, Spain, and later Genoa after 1745. Theodore von Neuhoﬀ made another attempt to expel the Genoese from Corsica in 1743. *The history of Theodore* described that the would-be-king came to a certain ‘court’, “where he met a much better reception than he had received elsewhere”.¹¹³ This ‘court’ was of course Britain. The author had to be careful when detailing British activity, especially concerning their actions in the ongoing conflict. On 18 January 1743 Theodore arrived on the shores of Corsica, once again aboard a British squadron.

¹⁰⁹ *The History of King Theodore I, King of Corsica*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for J Roberts, 1743), 2.

¹¹⁰ *The History of Theodore*, 2.

¹¹¹ *The History of Theodore*, 116.

¹¹² *The History of Theodore*, 80.

¹¹³ *The History of Theodore*, 119.

He issued a proclamation to reassert his ‘noble’ resolution “of driving the common enemy out of the kingdom”.¹¹⁴ In reality, the British officers were merely attempting to gauge how much support Theodore had on the island. Theodore then returned to Tuscany after ten days of patrolling the waters around Corsica. *The History of Theodore* was written shortly after these events had occurred, when there was a distinct possibility that Theodore, with British support, could become King of Corsica. The conclusion was defined by this sentiment: the author believed that there soon may be a second part written, as an “account for King Theodore’s...wonderful accession to the Corsican Throne”.¹¹⁵ The author’s admiration for Theodore seemed to cloud the reality of the situation. 1743 was the last time Theodore would visit Corsica, before dying in London in 1756. He was an adventurer for the romantics rather than a true sovereign for Corsica. The Corsicans would only gain a true leader with the introduction of Pasquale Paoli in 1755.

Was the arrival of Theodore on Corsica in 1743 an attempt at British intervention? The short answer is no. British activity on Corsica during the War of the Austrian Succession was usually limited as acting in an auxiliary role to her Sardinian and Austrian allies. This was also the case when the British fleet, acting in conjunction with Sardinian troops and Corsican rebels, bombarded the towns of Bastia and Saint-Florent in November 1745. There was nothing to suggest that the British government had any concrete interest in Corsica during this period. The main problem for the Corsican rebels before 1750 was their ‘tag’ as ‘insurgents’. Even the pro-Corsican text *A General account of Corsica* labelled the Corsicans as ‘malcontents’, as did most British newspapers. Support for the Corsican rebels against a ‘sovereign’ power could present problems about what entailed ‘sovereignty’. The British government at this time also suffered similar insurgency problems with the Jacobite rebellion in 1745-1746. Thus, the British government was reluctant to intervene during this period.

Rousseau and Paoli: the growth in the ‘popularity’ of the Corsican cause

Pasquale Paoli (1725-1807) first arrived on the island on 29 April 1755. He was soon elected General-in-Chief of the Corsican nation. By 1756, the Genoese had been

¹¹⁴ *The History of Theodore*, 131.

¹¹⁵ *The History of Theodore*, 139.

reduced to holding a few strongholds on the coast. Paoli was different to any previous Corsican chief. He attempted to create an independent Corsican Republic. Peter Thrasher has argued that Paoli had a policy of ensuring “that the Corsican cause was known to the outside world throughout the period of Corsican independence”.¹¹⁶ This was also apparent with the increased British newspaper coverage of Paoli’s activities. The *Public Advertiser* on 10 November 1755 noted that the Corsican rebels had found in Paoli a chief “of much greater abilities than they could ever boast before”.¹¹⁷ As previously noted, the British newspapers seemed fixated on a leader or figurehead. The 9 November 1764 edition of the *Gazetteer* contained the extract of an English gentleman at Corsica. Who this ‘English gentleman’ was remains a mystery; Boswell did not travel to the island until a year later. Perhaps the author was a British naval officer; they had visited the island in the past. We can only speculate over their identity. The letter described that the ‘firmness’ of Paoli was ‘astonishing’, and that he continued to “exhibit a composure that might do honour to the greatest general”.¹¹⁸ British newspapers were continually providing positive press on Paoli and his activities. The letter claimed that the ‘brave islanders’ had sworn that they would “not survive the loss of their liberty”.¹¹⁹ The Corsicans were being portrayed as ‘brave’ defenders of their liberty. This sentiment was identifiable with British ideals of liberty.

The man who made Corsica a far more known subject across Europe was Rousseau. Rousseau was one of the most prominent Enlightenment thinkers during the 1760s. His works *The Social contract* and *Emile: Or on Education* (both published in 1762), were popular throughout Europe, and were translated into a number of languages. Rousseau became infamous for these works, and both were subsequently banned in Paris and his home town of Geneva. The banning of these works only helped to enhance their popularity, particularly in England, where they were translated in 1763. Rousseau’s famous quote concerning Corsica in the *Social Contract* in 1762, as previously noted, helped to put the island on the map. Rousseau believed that Corsica was a small country of ‘noble’ savages who would one day ‘astonish’ the world.

¹¹⁶ Peter Thrasher, *Pasquale Paoli*, (London: Archon Books, 1970), 61.

¹¹⁷ Charles Fearn, “Amsterdam Oct 31”, *Public Advertiser*, 10 November 1755, Issue 6563.

¹¹⁸ “Extract of a Letter from an English Gentleman at Corsica”, *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 9 November 1764, Issue 11 133.

¹¹⁹ “Extract of a Letter”, *Gazetteer*, 9 November 1764, Issue 11 133.

Rousseau's positive language regarding Corsica captured the attention of a number of prominent Corsicans. The most prominent was Matteo Buttafoco (1731-1806), a Corsican military officer in the service of Paoli. Buttafoco wrote a letter to Rousseau on 31 August 1764, in which he noted that Rousseau had in *Social Contract* "mentioned the Corsicans in a very favourable manner".¹²⁰ Buttafoco informed Rousseau that Corsica was "capable of receiving a good system of legislation", but required "a legislator; it requires a man of your principles".¹²¹ The 'Corsican nation' wished for Rousseau to "become the sage counsellor who should devise the means of preserving that liberty, which it has cost so much blood to acquire".¹²² Buttafoco wanted Rousseau to draft a constitution for the fledgling Corsican Republic. Rousseau replied to Buttafoco on 22 September 1764, that it was "superfluous" to "try to excite my zeal for the company that you offer me".¹²³ Rousseau held the Corsican cause close to his heart. He gathered from Buttafoco's letter that he only wished for a 'political institution' for Corsica, and concluded that the Corsicans "already have a civil law of the body". Paoli had already instituted a number of civil laws for Corsica. Therefore, it became a question of "tracing a form of government that relates to it".¹²⁴ Rousseau required from Buttafoco a complete collection of Corsican laws. In a subsequent letter sent to Buttafoco on 15 October 1764, Rousseau expressed his belief that by the next spring, "I might propose my first ideas in a provisional form, and after three years my plan (for a) complete institution".¹²⁵ The 'provisional form' of government Rousseau spoke of was his *Constitution project for Corsica*. Rousseau required from Buttafoco: "all that concerns Mr. Paoli", a "good map of Corsica", the "history of the nation", and "all that makes the national genius".¹²⁶ In another letter sent on 10 November 1764, Buttafoco informed Rousseau that he would send three packets of collections/information regarding Corsica to him within the coming

¹²⁰ *Original Letters of J.J. Rousseau*, tr. C. Whittingham, (London: For H.D Symonds, 1799), 148.

¹²¹ *Original Letters of Rousseau*, 150.

¹²² *Original Letters of Rousseau*, 148.

¹²³ *Electronic Enlightenment*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Matteo Buttafoco, 22 September 1764.

¹²⁴ *Electronic Enlightenment*, Rousseau to Buttafoco, 22 September 1764.

¹²⁵ *Electronic Enlightenment*, Rousseau to Buttafoco, 15 October 1764.

¹²⁶ *Electronic Enlightenment*, Rousseau to Buttafoco, 15 October 1764.

months.¹²⁷ This information would form the basis for Rousseau's *Constitution project for Corsica*, drafted in 1765.

Rousseau's *Constitution project for Corsica* was the first part of a draft intended to lay down the constitutional framework for the Corsican Republic. Rousseau believed that the Corsican people were "fortunately disposed by nature to receive a good administration".¹²⁸ The advantageous location of Corsica offered for Rousseau reasonable hope that the Corsicans would be "able to become a flourishing people and to make their mark in Europe".¹²⁹ Boswell in his *Account of Corsica* would expand far more upon the natural strengths of Corsica, particularly for Britain. Rousseau believed his *Constitutional project* was the best way to "shape the nation to fit the government".¹³⁰ Rousseau saw himself as a Solon character who would legislate for the Corsicans. The degeneracy of other governments was due to the separation of "the body which governs and the body which is governed".¹³¹ The establishment of a 'good' constitution for Corsica in contrast "can begin at the beginning, and take steps to prevent degeneration".¹³² The 'savage' nature of the Corsicans meant that development of their institutions could start from scratch. Due to their undeveloped nature, the Corsicans had "not yet adopted the vices of other nations".¹³³ For Rousseau, everything depended upon a good constitution, which would provide "all the stability of which it [Corsica] is capable".¹³⁴

What Rousseau presented in his *Constitution project for Corsica* was a society based entirely upon agricultural produce. This stemmed from his belief that "no one who depends on others and lacks resources of his own, can ever be free".¹³⁵ Rousseau followed this same principle in the realm of foreign policy. Alliances only bind the weak to the strong and not the other way round. Rousseau advised the Corsicans to

127 *Original Letters of Rousseau*, 166.

128 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Constitutional Project for Corsica", *Political Writings*, ed. and tr. Frederick Williams, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 277.

129 Rousseau, "Constitutional Project", 279.

130 Rousseau, "Constitutional Project", 277.

131 Rousseau, "Constitutional Project", 277.

132 Rousseau, "Constitutional Project", 278.

133 Rousseau, "Constitutional Project", 278.

134 Rousseau, "Constitutional Project", 280.

135 Rousseau, "Constitutional Project", 280.

“depend on yourselves only”, as they had done throughout their history.¹³⁶ Rousseau firmly believed that “rules drawn from your own experience are the best by which to govern yourselves”.¹³⁷ By studying Corsica’s own situation, Rousseau believed that the island was “incapable of growing rich in money”; therefore it should “try to grow rich in men”.¹³⁸ Power was derived from population, which was “more real than that derived from finance, and is more certain in its effects”.¹³⁹ This idea was based upon Rousseau’s belief in the superiority of the ancients over the moderns.

Rousseau idolised ancient Rome and particularly Sparta. The latter was a small Greek state, whose power was based entirely upon its martial strength. The ‘superiority’ of the ancients shaped Rousseau’s opinion that “a state rich in money is always weak, and a state rich in men is always strong”.¹⁴⁰ Rousseau hated ‘corrupt’ modern commercial societies, which based their wealth and strength upon finance. Rousseau believed that finance provided an unstable foundation for a state. Manpower was always in ‘public view’, and therefore a more ‘real’ demonstration of power. The only way to ensure this increased manpower was through agriculture. Agriculture promoted population and increased birth rate. Rousseau was of the opinion that in the countryside, families had more children than city dwellers.¹⁴¹ Working in the countryside prevented “disorder and vice”; women were more chaste, with less habits of pleasure which allowed them to “produce more children”.¹⁴² Here Rousseau clearly had the early Roman Republic as his model. Each Roman citizen would work on the land, and provide military service when a crisis arose. Perhaps most importantly for Rousseau, was his belief that peasants were “more attached to their soil than are townsmen to their cities”.¹⁴³ Working on the land incited greater patriotism within the citizen soldiers of the republic. Rousseau would expand further upon this “ardent love of country” within his later work, *Considerations on the government of Poland* (1772).¹⁴⁴ For Rousseau,

136 Rousseau, “Constitutional Project”, 280.

137 Rousseau, “Constitutional Project”, 280.

138 Rousseau, “Constitutional Project”, 281.

139 Rousseau, “Constitutional Project”, 281.

140 Rousseau, “Constitutional Project”, 282.

141 Rousseau, “Constitutional Project”, 282.

142 Rousseau, “Constitutional Project”, 283.

143 Rousseau, “Constitutional Project”, 283.

144 Rousseau, “Considerations on the Government of Poland”, *Political Writings*, ed. and tr. Frederick Williams, (Wisconsin: The university of Wisconsin press, 1986), 168.

“agriculture is the only means of maintaining the external independence of a state”.¹⁴⁵ Tilling the soil was the “true education of a soldier”, which made men “patient and robust”.¹⁴⁶ Only by emulating the ancients could a nation become great. Rousseau followed a simple maxim; “commerce produces wealth, but agriculture ensures freedom”.¹⁴⁷ It may be better to have both, “but they are incompatible”; therefore an agricultural society was the best future for Corsica.¹⁴⁸

Rousseau’s belief that Corsica should become an agricultural society, was also based upon the island’s own circumstances. The form of government for Corsica must be the “least expensive, since Corsica is poor”.¹⁴⁹ The least costly administration in general was “the republican, and in particular the democratic state”.¹⁵⁰ This type of administration was favourable to agriculture, as power is “not being entirely at any one point”, and was “dispersed equally throughout the territory”.¹⁵¹ The democratic system, however, needed to be modified due to the size of Corsica; “a purely democratic government is suitable to a small town than to a nation”.¹⁵² Therefore Rousseau suggested a mixed government for Corsica, where “people assemble by sections rather than as a whole”.¹⁵³ The work of administration should be conducted by a small number of ‘enlightened men’, with the island populated equally between twelve regions. Corsica was blessed with a lack of nobility, which still existed in the majority of European states. This was an advantage for Corsica, which enabled for no distinctions, save “for merit, virtue and patriotic service”.¹⁵⁴ Equality was the main strength of Corsica.

Rousseau drew important parallels between the situation of Corsica and that of Switzerland, which was also a republic, and for the most part a “poor and sterile country”. Switzerland was a nation full of hard-working independent people, who had

¹⁴⁵ Rousseau, *“Constitutional Project”*, 283.

¹⁴⁶ Rousseau, *“Constitutional Project”*, 283.

¹⁴⁷ Rousseau, *“Constitutional Project”*, 283.

¹⁴⁸ Rousseau, *“Constitutional Project”*, 283.

¹⁴⁹ Rousseau, *“Constitutional Project”*, 284.

¹⁵⁰ Rousseau, *“Constitutional Project”*, 284.

¹⁵¹ Rousseau, *“Constitutional Project”*, 284.

¹⁵² Rousseau, *“Constitutional Project”*, 286.

¹⁵³ Rousseau, *“Constitutional Project”*, 286.

¹⁵⁴ Rousseau, *“Constitutional Project”*, 289.

“harmony in council and courage in battle”.¹⁵⁵ This enabled them to defend their liberty from the “most warlike troops of Europe”. This was the model Corsica “should follow in order to return to your original estate”.¹⁵⁶ The example of Switzerland however, also served as a warning to the potential problems that could face the Corsican Republic. The Swiss became mercenaries, and “became oppressors of the liberty of others”.¹⁵⁷ The introduction of commerce, industry and luxury destroyed the virtues that same life had engendered”.¹⁵⁸ Rousseau’s advice to the Corsicans was clear; avoid commerce, and focus on agriculture, in order to become independent from any other nation. The illustration of Switzerland served as a testament to this.

Rousseau’s *Constitution project for Corsica* was the first draft of an incomplete project, which he abandoned after the French invasion of Corsica in 1768. Rousseau’s *Constitution project for Corsica* was heavily influenced by *The Social Contract*. His later work *Considerations on the Government of Poland* (1772) completely contrasted with Rousseau’s proposed *Constitution project for Corsica*. Within his *Considerations*, Rousseau argued that it was “the ardent love of country”, or patriotism for their state, which turned the Spartans “into beings above the level of humanity”.¹⁵⁹ Rousseau again referenced the example of the Spartans, in order to reinforce his arguments about patriotism. Patriotism had played an important part in Rousseau’s *Constitution project for Corsica*; although it featured far more prominently in his *Considerations on the Government of Poland*. There are some obvious differences between Corsica and Poland. Poland was a large state; Rousseau’s aim in his *Considerations on the Government of Poland* was to give “the constitution of a great kingdom the vigour and stability of that of a small republic”.¹⁶⁰ Rousseau was reflecting upon the long held view that the type of government depended upon the size of the state. The size of nations was for Rousseau the “first and principal source of the misfortunes of the human race”. Small states- Republics or monarchies- “prosper merely by reason of the fact that they are small”.¹⁶¹ Republics in particular needed to be small, as citizens

¹⁵⁵ Rousseau, “*Constitutional Project*”, 296.

¹⁵⁶ Rousseau, “*Constitutional Project*”, 296.

¹⁵⁷ Rousseau, “*Constitutional Project*”, 296.

¹⁵⁸ Rousseau, “*Constitutional Project*”, 297.

¹⁵⁹ Rousseau, “*The Government of Poland*”, 164.

¹⁶⁰ Rousseau, “*The Government of Poland*”, 181.

¹⁶¹ Rousseau, “*The Government of Poland*”, 181.

needed to watch over one another.¹⁶² In order to accommodate for a Republican style of state in Poland, Rousseau argued that a federal government was “the only one which combines the advantages of large and small states”.¹⁶³

Perhaps the most notable difference between Rousseau’s proposed government of Poland to that of Corsica was the role of liberty. Rousseau’s *Considerations on the Government of Poland* exhibited a greater deal of caution and conservatism than his *Constitution project for Corsica*. Rousseau argued that the price of liberty could be much more ‘austere’ “than the yoke of tyrants”.¹⁶⁴ Rousseau recommended caution when freeing the common people of Poland. Precautions and time were needed for this enterprise. Rousseau warned the Polish nobility, to “not free their [common people] bodies until after you have freed their souls”.¹⁶⁵ Rousseau was far more cautious regarding the effects of liberty, which was “a food easy to eat, but hard to digest”.¹⁶⁶ Why did Rousseau’s proposed constitution for Poland contrast so much with his earlier work for Corsica? Rousseau was writing from the experiences of the earlier *Constitution project for Corsica*. He had seen the eventual conquest of Corsica in 1769, which crushed any hopes and dreams he had for the island. Ultimately, Corsica and Poland were very different nations, set in completely different circumstances. Poland was a more established and larger state, with its own already existing constitution. Corsica in contrast was a relatively young state, which needed a new constitution drafted. For Rousseau, Corsica held the promise for future glory, whilst Poland needed to regain their past greatness.

The *Constitution project for Corsica* drafted by Rousseau was never used by Buttafoco or Paoli. Why was this the case? Paoli had already developed a unique democratic form of government for Corsica, which will be described in the section concerning Boswell’s *Account of Corsica*. Rousseau himself candidly admitted that “my ideas differ prodigiously from those of your nation”.¹⁶⁷ Buttafoco was to an extent working independently from Paoli, during his contact with Rousseau: he believed that Corsicans

¹⁶² Rousseau, “The Government of Poland”, 182.

¹⁶³ Rousseau, “The Government of Poland”, 183.

¹⁶⁴ Rousseau, “The Government of Poland”, 186.

¹⁶⁵ Rousseau, “The Government of Poland”, 187.

¹⁶⁶ Rousseau, “The Government of Poland”, 187.

¹⁶⁷ *Electronic Enlightenment*, Rousseau to Buttafoco, 24 March 1765.

would remain wretched “if a beneficent hand did not conduct them to happiness by a wise political code”.¹⁶⁸ Clearly, Buttafoco did not believe that Paoli could wholly reform the ‘ignorance’ of the Corsicans. Buttafoco seemed somewhat jealous and fearful of the ‘exorbitant’ authority Paoli had on the island. Buttafoco revealed to Rousseau that Paoli’s advice was of very great weight, and “always decisive of the general voice”.¹⁶⁹ He did however admire Paoli, and admitted that “yet he had abused no part of his authority”.¹⁷⁰ Eventually, Buttafoco himself would later betray Paoli, when he became an officer in the French army during their invasion of Corsica in 1768.

Buttafoco wanted Rousseau himself to visit Corsica. Rousseau declined due to ‘fatigues’ and ‘other obstacles’ preventing him from going to Corsica.¹⁷¹ Was it really the case that Rousseau could have perhaps become the legislator of Corsica, if he had visited the island? Boswell mentioned this episode in his *Account of Corsica*. Boswell wrote that Rousseau would never have become a Solon figure for the island. Rather, it was the case that “Paoli was too able a man to submit the legislation of his country to one who was an entire stranger to the people, the manners, and in short to everything in the island”.¹⁷² Paoli had wished simply to employ Rousseau to record the ‘heroic’ actions of the Corsicans. What was clear was that both Buttafoco and Paoli had both hoped to use Rousseau’s prestige and fame to enhance Corsica’s position in Europe. Nevertheless Rousseau remained an avid supporter of the Corsican Republic, promising that “for the rest of my life I shall never be more occupied” than with Corsica; every other business was “entirely banished from my mind”.¹⁷³

Catherine Macaulay’s *A short sketch of a democratical form of government* (1767)

Rousseau was not the only writer who provided allusions between the ancient republics and Corsica. Catherine Macaulay (1731-1791) was an English historian, who between 1763-1783 published her most famous work, *The History of England from the Accession of James I to the Revolution*. Divided into eight volumes, the first volume

¹⁶⁸Original Letters of Rousseau, 157.

¹⁶⁹Original Letters of Rousseau, 169.

¹⁷⁰Original Letters of Rousseau, 170.

¹⁷¹Electronic Enlightenment, Rousseau to Buttafoco, 26 May 1765.

¹⁷²Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 269.

¹⁷³Electronic Enlightenment, Rousseau to Buttafoco, 26 May 1765.

was published in 1763 and made Macaulay a well known writer within Britain. She was also a known republican writer, who became a supporter of the radical John Wilkes during the later 1760s. Her only work concerning Corsica was *A short sketch of a democratical form of government*, published in 1767 as an attachment to her pamphlet, *Loose remarks on certain positions to be found in Mr. Hobbes philosophical rudiments of government and society*. In her *Loose remarks*, Macaulay focused upon the aspects of monarchy discussed in Hobbes' famous work, *Leviathan* (1651). Macaulay argued that Hobbes preferred a monarchical state before all others; however, this assertion was "contradicted by the only civilized societies in ancient history, Viz. The Greeks, from whom alone we can learn ancient prudence".¹⁷⁴ Macaulay, similarly to Rousseau, used the examples of the ancient Greeks and Romans to support her arguments on political theory. For Macaulay, political equality was essential for the laws of good government; one could never "exist to perfection without the other".¹⁷⁵ Macaulay's discussions on monarchy in *Loose remarks* contrasted directly with her discussions of Republicanism in the second part of the publication, *A short sketch of a democratical form of government*. *A short sketch* was purposely published as the secondary section to the *Loose remarks*: Macaulay intended to contrast Hobbes' writings on monarchy to her proposed republican form of government. In *A short sketch*, her letter to the "renowned Paoli" on the "important subject of Corsican liberty" was intended as a challenge to the established arguments of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* on monarchy.¹⁷⁶

Similarly to Rousseau's *Constitution project for Corsica*, Macaulay's *Short Sketch* intended to draft a democratic form of government for the new Corsican republic. For Macaulay, only a democratic system, rightly balanced could "secure the virtue, liberty, and happiness of society".¹⁷⁷ Macaulay, like Rousseau, drew heavily upon ancient examples to support her republican version of government. This was based upon the belief that the ancient states such as Athens, Rome and Sparta were superior to any 'modern' state. The ancient and modern dispute was a series of intellectual debates

¹⁷⁴ Catherine Macaulay, *Loose Remarks on Certain Positions to be Found in Mr Hobbes Philosophical Rudiments of Government and Society. With a Short Sketch of a Democratical form of Government in a Letter to signor Paoli*, 2nd Ed, (London: Printed for W. Johnson, 1769), 10.

¹⁷⁵ Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 12.

¹⁷⁶ Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 21.

¹⁷⁷ Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 21.

within a variety of fields including literature, philosophy, intellectual history, science etc. Macaulay in particular drew heavily upon the example of the Roman Republic. This was most evidenced in the form of republican government she envisaged for Corsica. She believed that two orders in state were necessary; namely the senate and the people. Macaulay firmly believed in a well-constituted senate, who were to be the wise “guardians” of public liberty, and were not to accede fifty men.¹⁷⁸ The second order of state were the “representatives of the people”, who should not be under two hundred and fifty men. These were to be elected from the several districts and cities, into “which this island may be divided”.¹⁷⁹ The senate would meet thrice a week, and the representatives of the people would meet at stated times, or when the necessity of office requires.¹⁸⁰ The affairs of commerce, and all matters relative to the state and executive powers of government, were to be “determined by the representative body”, after they were first debated in the senate.¹⁸¹ Despite using romanized language to describe the different parts of government, it was clear here that Macaulay was following the example of the Houses of Parliament. The senate was like the House of Lords, who kept the representatives of the people/House of Commons in check. The representative assembly did not have the power of determining peace and war, imposing taxes and the making and altering of laws, until “these subjects have been first debated by the senate”.¹⁸²

Despite Macaulay’s claim of drafting a democratic form of government, she was in reality promoting the British constitutional system. The senate were to be filled by the ‘wisest’: generals, admirals, civil magistrate and officers of every important post.¹⁸³ The checks and balances of the British system were clearly recreated within the system Macaulay decreed for Corsica. However, the representative assembly as described by Macaulay was open to all men. This was the most democratic element of Macaulay’s prescribed government for Corsica, albeit in an oligarchical system. There were very few writers who adhered to a democratic system in its entirety. Whilst writers such as Rousseau and Macaulay adopted democratic elements within their proposed

¹⁷⁸ Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 22-23.

¹⁷⁹ Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 23.

¹⁸⁰ Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 23.

¹⁸¹ Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 24.

¹⁸² Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 24.

¹⁸³ Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 23.

governmental systems, they never advocated a democratic state of the style of ancient Athens. Rousseau himself was against democracy. This was most evident in his *Considerations on the government of Poland*, when he was describing the composition of his proposed senate for Poland. Rousseau argued for a limit to the amount of deputies within the senate, as too many “might make too much commotion in the state and approach too near a democratic tumult”.¹⁸⁴ Rather, Rousseau favoured the proportion of senators to be decreased, in order to avoid this outcome. Rousseau preferred an oligarchic state, with democratic elements included within the system. A pure democracy was always out of the question, for both Rousseau and Macaulay; it only produced anarchy.

Macaulay used the Roman Republic as an example of a defective form of Republican government, much in the same way Rousseau had used Switzerland. Macaulay argued that balance was a key tenet for her proposed Corsican constitution. Two important articles were needed in order to prevent the slide into ‘corruption’; namely the rotation of all offices and the fixing of the division of lands on a proper balance.¹⁸⁵ Here Macaulay adhered firmly to the model provided by the Roman Republic. She argued that the Roman Republic “might perhaps have stood to this day” if there had been a rotation of offices, and a balance in the agrarian structure.¹⁸⁶ The prolongation of commands of Marius, Sulla, Pompey and Caesar were unnatural, which led to the concentration of too much power in the hands of one man. To prevent such concentration of power, rotation of office was crucial. The whole senate would change once in three years; a third of the chamber would be changed yearly. The vacant posts would be supplied from the body of representatives, and they in turn supplied from the people. No member of the senate or representative body would be capable of re-election under the space of three years.¹⁸⁷ This for Macaulay would prevent the rise of a Caesar like figure. Macaulay included an article allowing for a dictator in ‘extreme circumstances’; their term of office however was limited to one month.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Rousseau, “The Government of Poland”, 200.

¹⁸⁵ Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 24.

¹⁸⁶ Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 24.

¹⁸⁷ Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 26.

¹⁸⁸ Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 27.

Macaulay believed that the imbalance in land ownership was the biggest single cause of the fall of the Roman Republic: an agrarian structure fixed on a proper balance would have “prevented that extreme disproportion in the circumstances of her citizens”.¹⁸⁹ This gave the weight of power to the aristocratic party, which in turn led to civil war and anarchy. Anarchy in turn “produced its natural effect, viz. Absolute monarchy” of the emperors.¹⁹⁰ To solve this issue, the balance of land must favour the popular side. The landed and personal effects of every man would be equally divided at his decease, between his male heirs.¹⁹¹ Interestingly Macaulay excluded female heirship, in order to prevent an aristocratic accumulation of property.¹⁹² Despite being a woman, Macaulay advocated for Corsica a male dominated republic. Only men had the right to vote and stand for office. Here however Macaulay simply followed the model of the Roman Republic; women representation was simply unrealistic during the mid-eighteenth century.

Macaulay’s republican government was heavily based upon the ancient Roman model. It was to be primarily an agricultural society, with each citizen a land owner, much like Rousseau’s proposed model. This model seemed to be based upon the arguments raised by the physiocrats, and their attempts to reform France during the 1760s and 1770s. However, Rousseau himself was known for his criticism of the physiocrat system, and in particular, his rejection of “the idealism of the physiocratic system with its reliance on the goodwill of a ‘despot’ to restore the natural order of societies.”¹⁹³ More importantly for both Macaulay and Rousseau, was that they viewed the Corsicans as ancient Roman citizens, who could emulate the ‘great’ achievements of the Roman Republic. Rousseau himself was not against commerce in general. Rousseau “subscribed, in the cases of Poland, Corsica and Switzerland, to the idea of closed commercial state”.¹⁹⁴ In the case of Corsica, he advocated an agricultural society based upon the islands own circumstances and parameters. Macaulay hardly mentioned

189 Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 25.

190 Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 25.

191 Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 26.

192 Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 27.

193 Théophile Pénigaud, “The Political Opposition of Rousseau to Physiocracy: Government, Interest, Citizenship”, *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 22:3, 473-499, (2015), 473.

194 Minchul Kim, “Two Visions of Commercial Society in the Eighteenth Century”, *Global Intellectual History*, 1:1, (2016), 91-94, 94.

commerce within her *Short sketch*, instead focusing upon a predominately agricultural society for Corsica.

Macaulay herself noted that her *A Short sketch* was but “the rough sketch of that only form of government which is capable of preserving dominion and freedom to the people”.¹⁹⁵ She planned further correspondence with Paoli, and would next treat the subjects of the militia, police and the education of youth.¹⁹⁶ Ultimately, Macaulay argued for the necessity of an unrestricted power lodged in some person, capable of the arduous task of settling such a government. She believed Paoli to be the most capable candidate of this “high employment” as the legislator of the new Corsican Republic.¹⁹⁷ Macaulay believed that Paoli had the opportunity of “immortalising” his name, and may be ranked “among the foremost of mortals, with Timoleon, Lycurgus, Solon and Brutus”.¹⁹⁸ Ironically, Macaulay’s praise of Paoli’s status seemed to contradict her warnings against an all powerful individual within a republic. Paoli’s role however was to legislate the new constitution, and then to stand down, once the new government had been formed. Macaulay later thanked Boswell for transmitting to her “agreeable intelligence” that her *A Short sketch* “has met the approbation of the Corsican chief Paoli”.¹⁹⁹ Boswell had sent Macaulay’s *A Short sketch* in a package to Paoli in early 1768. Macaulay thanked Boswell, as she had no idea the pamphlet “would ever come to the hands of that illustrious modern worthy”.²⁰⁰ Macaulay made it clear to Boswell that the work was incomplete, in part due to “the laborious fatiguing work which I am now upon”; the eight volume *History of England*. What Paoli made of Macaulay’s *A Short sketch* remains unknown. Paoli had already legislated his own form of government for Corsica, as illustrated in the next section. Whether Paoli would have used some of Macaulay’s ideas will never be known, especially following the French invasion of Corsica in June 1768. Both Rousseau and Macaulay were heavily influenced by the ancient connotations of republicanism, when describing Corsica. Both advocated a primarily agricultural society for the relatively undeveloped island.

195 Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 27.

196 Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 28.

197 Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 28.

198 Macaulay, *Loose Remarks*, 28.

199 Macaulay, “From Catherine Macaulay, 17 February 1768”, *The General Correspondence of James Boswell 1766-1769*, vol. 2, 1768-1769, ed. Richard Cole, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1997), 22.

200 Macaulay, “17 February 1768”, *The general correspondence of James Boswell*, 22.

Rousseau and Macaulay represented the third stage of British interest, where they described the Corsicans as modern Romans, worthy of admiration.

James Boswell and his *Account of Corsica* (1768)

Rousseau's praise of Corsica was the reason for James Boswell's visit to the island. Boswell was in the midst of completing his tour of Europe. This was something many young British gentlemen usually did during the eighteenth-century. What made Boswell so different was his visit to the relatively unknown isle of Corsica in 1765. He was the first British man to visit and stay on the island for a long period (almost a month). More importantly, he wrote his *Account of Corsica* some three years after returning to England. Katherine Turner believes that Boswell's *Account of Corsica* put the island "firmly on the map for British readers".²⁰¹ Turner notes that the account was "widely and enthusiastically reviewed in its appearance".²⁰² It went through some three editions and four translations before 1800. The *Account of Corsica* was certainly the most important publication on the island of Corsica in Britain, during the eighteenth-century. For many British readers, it was the only book of authority on Corsica: its importance cannot be underestimated. What is certain was that Boswell's visit to Corsica gave him a cause to fight for, as well as a literary reputation. Boswell's *Account of Corsica* represented a change from the previous works of both Rousseau and Macaulay. Rousseau and Macaulay suggested a republican form of government for Corsica, independent from outside influence. They recommended an economy based entirely upon agricultural produce. Boswell in contrast focused far more upon the commercial potential of Corsica. He was the first to argue that Britain should seek an alliance with Corsica, in order to aid their commercial development.

Boswell's *Account of Corsica* was divided into two main sections; the first part was a natural and political history of the island. The second part was the Journal of his tour and meeting with Paoli. I will now focus on the first section of Boswell's book. In the preface Boswell explained that he derived some of his materials from two French books on Corsica. He also gained much material from Mr Burnaby's tour to Corsica in

²⁰¹ Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe, 1750-1800: Authorship, Gender and National Identity*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 64.

²⁰² Turner, *British Travel Writers*, 63.

1766. Burnaby allowed for his own tour of Corsica to be “freely interwoven” into Boswell’s account.²⁰³ These sources were added to help complete the history section of Boswell’s book. Boswell concluded his preface by noting that the book was “my little monument to liberty”.²⁰⁴ The question however remained; what entailed liberty? ‘Liberty’ meant for Boswell “health of the mind”, and enabled a “full exercise of our faculties”.²⁰⁵ Boswell believed that liberty was ‘natural’ and ‘dear’ to mankind; it was “indispensably necessary to our happiness”.²⁰⁶ Here Boswell recited the general British interest in the cause of ‘liberty’. The world was ‘roused’ by the mention of liberty, and the “gallant achievements of those who have distinguished themselves in the glorious cause”.²⁰⁷

Boswell recalled that Rome and Athens were both bastions of liberty, forever known. In more ‘modern’ times, the spirit of liberty was found with the Swiss and Dutch; proof of this could also be “found in the annals of our own country”.²⁰⁸ Boswell argued that this spirit of liberty was shared among these countries, including Britain. A more distinguished example of liberty “exists in the island of Corsica”.²⁰⁹ Boswell expanded the importance of Corsica to worldly proportions; a sentiment typical throughout his *Account of Corsica*. More importantly, Boswell attempted to provide an unbreakable link between Britain and Corsica; the ‘undefeatable’ cause of liberty. Boswell alluded to the struggles suffered previously by both the Dutch and Swiss; both states were “assisted by powerful nations in the recovery of their liberties”.²¹⁰ In the Dutch case, England was one of those ‘powerful nations’ who had assisted them in their war against the Spanish. Boswell clearly hinted that England should again help a nation fighting for its liberty. Boswell also used this comparison for another reason; although Corsica in her struggle for liberty had been “single and unsupported”, she had “weathered the storm”.²¹¹ This made her account more ‘favourable’ and remarkable,

203 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, viii.

204 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, viii.

205 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 1.

206 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 1.

207 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 4.

208 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 5.

209 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 5.

210 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 6.

211 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 6.

which would surely “interest the generous in its favour”.²¹² Those ‘generous’ Boswell spoke of were the British people. The main question that needs to be asked is what kind of intervention did Boswell wish from Britain? Did he envisage an alliance with Corsica, or for the island to become a British territory?

The first chapter of Boswell’s account focused on the natural history of Corsica. Many previous works had emphasised the natural strengths of Corsica. Boswell’s aim was to argue that Corsica’s natural strength made her a viable ‘base’ for Britain in the Mediterranean. For example, he noted that the harbour at Porto Vecchio was a ‘spacious harbour’ some five miles long, “capable of containing a very large fleet”.²¹³ The account of the harbours of Corsica showcased how advantageous “an alliance with this island might be to any of the maritime powers of Europe”; or more specifically Britain.²¹⁴ Here Boswell clearly favoured an alliance with Paoli’s Corsican republic. The British navy would be able to use Corsican ports to harbour their fleets. This was important considering that parts of Corsica “might be formidable to France” being located close to the coast of Provence.²¹⁵ Boswell was identifying for Britain the strategic importance of Corsica; something which the French ministry knew well. Inland Corsica was largely ‘uninhabited’, being covered mostly by woods. The majority lived in small villages, similar to certain cantons in Switzerland and some parts of ancient Germany.²¹⁶ Boswell was always attempting to provide parallels between Corsica and other historical nations famed for their liberty. More specifically, Boswell usually recalled ancient examples in an attempt to glorify Corsica. He drew a “comparison between Corte and Lacedaemon”; both were capital cities built upon acropolises.²¹⁷ Boswell’s comparison of Corsica to Sparta was clearly influenced by Rousseau, whom he admired. The general description of Corsica showed that it was a “country of considerable importance”.²¹⁸ Boswell alluded to the fact that Homer’s

212 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 7.

213 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 15.

214 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 16.

215 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 6.

216 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 22.

217 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 25.

218 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 39.

description of Ithaca “may be well applied to Corsica”.²¹⁹ By recalling Homer, Boswell attempted to portray Corsica in heroic proportions.

Boswell followed this chapter by reciting the revolution’s Corsica had undergone throughout their history. Boswell attempted to portray the history of Corsica since the time of Roman rule, as one where “that spirit of liberty, which tyrants call rebellion, was ever breaking forth”.²²⁰ Corsica’s history was marred by occupation; liberty would eventually emerge with the introduction of Paoli’s republic. Boswell agreed with many eighteenth-century commentators that the Genoese “were the worst nation to whom Corsica could have fallen”.²²¹ Their mighty misrule of the island had already been recorded by numerous other contemporary writers. Boswell wrote that the Corsicans could not be governed “but by a state, of which they stood somewhat in awe, and which, by humanity and proper encouragement, might have conciliated their affections”.²²² The state which Boswell spoke of can be construed to be Britain, who, through her shared ideas of liberty would be able to guide Corsica to reach her ‘potential’.

Did Boswell believe that only British rule of the island would enable the Corsicans to ‘advance’ from their ‘violent’ savage stage? Boswell mentioned that in 1746, two Corsican envoys approached the Earl of Bristol, who was the ambassador to the court of Turin. The Corsicans proposed that “Corsica should put herself entirely under the protection of Great Britain”.²²³ The Earl replied that it was not “then the time to enter into any treaty with them”.²²⁴ By mentioning this incident, Boswell attempted to show that the prospect of British protection over Corsica had been previously raised. Boswell had planted the seed of thought entertaining this prospect. British protection of the island was the future which most appealed to Boswell; Corsican freedom would be maintained, and British influence could be properly established.

219 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 39.

220 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 47.

221 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 54.

222 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 54.

223 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 88.

224 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 88.

Boswell's description of the history of Corsica built up to one crucial moment: the arrival of Pasquale Paoli. In the preface of his *Account of Corsica*, Boswell described that publicly bestowing praise on a character makes the person appear to be "a cringing parasite, or a fond enthusiast".²²⁵ Boswell however had no apprehensions when inscribing his book to Paoli; his virtues were "universally acknowledged".²²⁶ Boswell's *Account of Corsica* in general was more of an ode to Paoli than a history of Corsica. Paoli's arrival on Corsica was the turning point in the Corsican's battle for liberty. The historical section of Boswell's *Account of Corsica* recorded Paoli's activities as a statesman. The Journal would provide a more personal portrait of the man. Paoli, when he came to the island on 15 July 1755 found only "disorder and confusion". Unlike previous chiefs, Paoli attended to the administration of the island in order to implement the principals of democratic rule.²²⁷ One of his first acts was his attempt to abolish the practice of the Vendetta. The right of private revenge was something which had plagued the Corsicans; the Genoese actively encouraged it in order to enhance their own rule. Paoli was able to gradually bring "strict exercise of criminal justice" in order to abolish the practice.²²⁸ Boswell argued that "the Corsicans are naturally humane"; however like other southern nations, they were "extremely violent in their tempers".²²⁹ This was caused by the effects of a warm climate; or so was believed by many eighteenth-century writers. The main picture Boswell attempted to present was that Paoli had 'civilised' the Corsicans. He prepared the Corsicans "for the reception of laws" by cultivating their minds.²³⁰ This was implemented by the university he founded at Corte in 1764, and the institution of proper schools in every village of the Republic. Paoli was presented by Boswell not only as a war leader, but as an enlightened hero. Boswell argued that Paoli laid the foundations for a future victory over the Genoese, by providing "stability to the civil constitution of his country".²³¹

The last chapter of Boswell's history of Corsica focused on Paoli's administration of the island. Paoli's republic was the 'result' of "these (aforementioned) exertions in the

225 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, iii.

226 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, iv.

227 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 95.

228 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 96.

229 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 96.

230 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 97.

231 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 103.

cause of liberty”; her history had been developing for this moment.²³² When describing the government of Corsica, Boswell made constant comparisons to Holland; a more well known Republic to English readers. This enabled Boswell to more easily explain certain parts of the Corsican constitution. For example, Paoli held the office of General for life, which for Boswell held a similar role to the Stadtholder of Holland. Boswell commented that the Corsican government was looked upon “as the best model that hath ever existed in the democratical form”.²³³ Sparta in contrast had had a “nervous constitution” that was “deficient in gentleness and humanity”.²³⁴ Boswell recalled the general interest (and his own) in Sparta brought about by Rousseau. Boswell argued that the militia were “the true strength of a free nation”; the Corsicans had both Spartan martial glory and a ‘humane’ democratic government.²³⁵ Boswell attempted to portray Corsica in a far more sympathetic light to his British readers than that of Sparta.

Boswell also argued that Corsica was “certainly designed by nature to be strong at sea, having so many good harbours, and so much excellent timber”.²³⁶ They were however not yet skilled in ship building, nor had enough money to employ proper artificers. Boswell expected to see “the Corsicans distinguished... as a commercial nation”.²³⁷ Trade always flourished in the most republican nations; Boswell referenced De Witt’s *Interest of Holland* (1662) to support his argument. By portraying Corsica as a potential commercial hub, Boswell attempted to raise British government interest in the island. By identifying Corsica’s potential importance as a naval base, Boswell could prompt British intervention on the island in the rebels favour. Here, Boswell alluded to the original British interest in Corsica; its strategic importance. The British could be relied upon to act if there was a reasonable profit involved. Such was the commercial nature of the British Empire during the eighteenth-century. Boswell’s attempts to persuade Britain to intervene in Corsica were at their most unabashed in his concluding notes on the history of Corsica. Here he revealed the true purpose of his account:

²³² Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 104.

²³³ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 116.

²³⁴ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 116.

²³⁵ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 128.

²³⁶ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 133.

²³⁷ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 134.

“Nothing has cast a greater damp upon the improvements of Corsica, than the king of Great Britain’s proclamation after the late peace, forbidding his subjects to have any intercourse with that nation”.²³⁸

Thus, Britain’s non-involvement with Corsica had hindered the very development of a democratic nation. Boswell noted that he could not “take upon to say” the reasons for this proclamation; they were behind the veil of government secrets.²³⁹ This seemed to be the crucial problem for Boswell when promoting the cause of Corsica. The majority of people could be persuaded, yet the government could not; its intentions were always a mystery to the public. Boswell asserted that “a good correspondence with Corsica would be of no small advantage to the commercial interest of this country” especially on account of the fish trade and British woollen manufactures.²⁴⁰ If not for the proclamation, Boswell argued that during the last war (Seven Years War), the Corsicans could “have had several of our stoutest privateers in their service” which would have given the Corsicans authority at sea.²⁴¹ Such aid was ‘worthy’ of a people “who have done much to secure to themselves the same blessings” of government and liberty found in Britain.²⁴²

The shared spirit of liberty between Britain and Corsica was supported by a reference from an Encycopédie section. The *Essai de crit, sur le Prince de Machiavel* (first written by a young Frederick the Great in 1739), claimed that the “Corsicans are a handful of men, as brave and determinate as the English”.²⁴³ I was able to find and confirm Boswell’s reference in Frederick’s work *Essai de crit, sur le Prince de Machiavel*, which was published anonymously and released by his friend, the famous Voltaire (1694-1778). Boswell believed that the Corsicans had similar manners to the ancient Germans, as described by Tacitus (56-120) in his *On the mores of the Germans* (also translated as *On the origins and geography of Germany*). Tacitus described that the “whole community” of ancient Germans would gather to discuss the main affairs of

238 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 135.

239 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 135.

240 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 135.

241 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 135.

242 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 135.

243 *Essai de Crit, sur le Prince de Machiavel* (Amsterdam: Jacques la Chze, 1741), 101, Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 156.

state, after first being considered in advance by the chiefs.²⁴⁴ Montesquieu in his *Spirit of the laws* (1748) expressed that “the English have taken their idea of government from the Germans”; the House of Lords was like the council of Germanic chiefs, first considering the issues subsequently debated in the House of Commons.²⁴⁵

Ultimately, the overarching similarity between these examples was liberty. Boswell commented that the Corsicans, “as lovers of liberty, must naturally have a respect for the British, as indeed is the case”.²⁴⁶ He hoped that “other views will prevail in the councils of this nation”.²⁴⁷ Boswell was directly challenging the British stance on Corsica, and prompted his readers to do so too. Britain’s sovereign was, after all, “animated with genuine sentiments of liberty”, and thus possessed of every virtue to make his own people happy.²⁴⁸ Surely the king “would naturally wish to extend his beneficence” to the Corsicans.²⁴⁹ Britain should offer protection to other peoples fighting for their liberty. The Corsicans were “gloriously striving for the best rights of humanity”.²⁵⁰ Boswell directly questioned his readers as to whether they could “be indifferent as to their success”.²⁵¹ For Boswell, the answer was an unmitigated no.

Journal of a tour to that island and memoirs of Pascal Paoli

Boswell’s history of the island was similar to the other publications previously cited, merely providing a more up to date version for British readers. The second section of Boswell’s book was far more unique. His *Journal of a tour to that island* provided an in-depth and personal description of affairs in Corsica. Boswell described that he “had full leisure and the best opportunities to observe everything, in my progress through the island”.²⁵² His journal was one of the best sources to record the normal lives of the Corsicans during the rule of Paoli. Boswell wrote of his astonishment at “how little the real state of Corsica was known, even by those who had good access to know it”.²⁵³ An

244 Cornelius Tacitus, *The Agricola and the Germania*, tr. S.A Handford, (London: Penguin books, 1970), 110.

245 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 166.

246 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 136.

247 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 136.

248 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 136.

249 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 136.

250 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 162.

251 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 162.

252 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 206.

253 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 199.

officer of the British navy, who had visited the island, said to Boswell that travelling across the island ran the risk of “going among these barbarians”.²⁵⁴ This was the view point Boswell attempted to rectify.

Boswell’s journal described the Corsicans at a far more personal level, somewhat approachable and familiar for many British readers. Boswell recorded that the bee-keepers of the island “seemed much at their ease, living in peace and plenty”.²⁵⁵ The Corsicans were normal people with simple professions or roles. Boswell stressed the simplicity of Corsican lives, describing the people as having “nothing, and yet possessing all things”.²⁵⁶ These were a people comparable to the ancient Spartans or Romans. Boswell recalled that some Corsicans complained to him of their poverty; he replied that “they were much happier in their present state than in a state of refinement and vice”.²⁵⁷ Boswell was heavily influenced in this sentiment by Rousseau. Boswell was presenting a moral message to his British readers; beware the vices of luxury. The most crucial section of Boswell’s Journal was his meeting with Paoli. The Journal was the crux of Boswell’s entire account, with the character of Paoli at its centre. Boswell later used this biographical style of writing in his *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791). Boswell’s history of the island chronicled the background to the events recorded in his Journal. Upon first meeting Paoli, Boswell described that he had “come from seeing the ruins of one brave and free people; I now see the rise of another”.²⁵⁸ The ‘brave’ and ‘free’ people Boswell spoke of were the ancient inhabitants of Rome, which he had visited before coming to Corsica. The idea that the Corsicans could potentially become a new Rome was constantly stressed by Boswell. Paoli however stated that the Corsicans had no chance of replicating Rome; “their situation, and modern political systems, rendered this impossible”.²⁵⁹ The character of Paoli served as the foil and guide to a younger naïve Boswell; similar to the role played by Mentor to Telemachus in Fenelon’s *The Adventures of Telemachus, son of Ulysses* (1699). This image only served to enhance Paoli’s inspirational character.

254 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 199.

255 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 208.

256 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 209.

257 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 215.

258 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 217.

259 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 217.

Ultimately, Boswell attempted to depict Paoli as a Roman hero- a Corsican Cincinnatus. Paoli was “wedded to his country, and the Corsicans are his children”.²⁶⁰ This patriotic conviction was typical of a stoic Roman or Spartan. This patriotic zeal was also promoted by Rousseau, and was highlighted in his later work *Considerations on the government of Poland* (1772). Boswell believed that Paoli “lives in the times of antiquity”.²⁶¹ Paoli as a young man “would form his mind to glory” not by reading “modern memoirs...but Plutarch and Titus Livius”.²⁶² What purpose was served by describing Paoli as an ancient hero? Many British readers were most probably aware of the classical texts, which remained a staple part of eighteenth-century education. Readers could identify with these ancient figures, and therefore with Paoli. Perhaps the most intriguing description of Paoli is that of his dreams or future visions. Boswell mentioned that this was a mysterious circumstance in Paoli’s character, which was universally believed in Corsica. Boswell responded by arguing that Paoli had propagated this opinion “in order that he might have more authority in civilizing a rude and ferocious people”.²⁶³ Whether this was truly the case remained questionable. However, this rather ‘strange’ aspect of Paoli’s character had to be explained in some way. This section showed that Boswell had included all of his notes and recordings from his Journal, as this segment in fact hindered Boswell’s portrayal of Paoli as a noble and enlightened hero. Boswell decided to include all aspects of Paoli’s character.

Boswell in his Journal also noted his discussions with Paoli on Britain. Boswell claimed that he “did everything in my power to make them [the Corsicans] fond of the British, and bid them hope for an alliance with us”.²⁶⁴ Paoli spoke ‘highly’ “on preserving the independency of Corsica”, and would “not submit ourselves to the dominion of the greatest nation in Europe”: Britain.²⁶⁵ This sentiment seems to indicate that Boswell believed in an alliance with Corsica, rather than dominion. Boswell recorded that Paoli “seemed hurt by our treatment of his country”.²⁶⁶ Boswell recalled the proclamation which prevented British aid to the Corsicans, denouncing them as

²⁶⁰ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 227.

²⁶¹ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 246.

²⁶² Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 246.

²⁶³ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 253.

²⁶⁴ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 235.

²⁶⁵ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 236.

²⁶⁶ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 237.

rebels. Boswell illustrated the Corsicans as the victims of harsh treatment from the British government. More specifically, Boswell attempted to make his readers question how the British government could treat a 'hero' such as Paoli so unfairly. Boswell wrote that Paoli "showed his great respect for the British nation, and I could see he wished much to be in friendship with us".²⁶⁷ Despite Britain's indifferent relations with the Corsicans, Paoli still wished for an alliance. Boswell concluded that Paoli was "one of those men who are no longer to be found but in the lives of Plutarch"; he was an ancient hero, in an eighteenth-century world.²⁶⁸

Conclusion: Rousseau and Boswell the intellectual basis for ideas on Corsica?

The development of British opinion on Corsica from 1728 to 1768 can be divided into four distinct phases. The first phase was interest primarily in profit; the selling of arms and supplies to the island. This was typified by the support provided to Theodore Von Neuhoff. Corsica was rich in natural resources that could be exploited. Corsica also had many natural harbours suitable for large ships. The strategic importance of Corsica was a theme which never truly disappeared. Boswell on several occasions in his *Account of Corsica* (1768) identified for British readers the great commercial advantages that could be gained from an alliance with Corsica. Britain could always be relied on to attempt to gain any commercial profit. The second phase saw the illustration of the Corsicans as a people devoted to liberty, which was an attempt to gain British self-understanding. The two anonymous publications *A General account of Corsica* (1739) and *The history of Theodore I* (1743) best represented this phase.

Rousseau's *Constitution project for Corsica* and Macaulay's *Short sketch* represented the third phase of British interest in Corsica. Both attempted to draft a Republican Constitution for a potentially independent Corsica. The Corsicans were portrayed as ancient Roman/Spartan citizens who were defending their liberty. These citizens would work the land and would fight in times of crisis. The Corsicans were ancient heroes, somewhat out of place in the modern world. Rousseau's depiction of the Corsicans as ancient Roman citizen soldiers provided a lasting image for many Britons. Throughout the eighteenth century in Britain, Corsica was continually portrayed as a modern

²⁶⁷ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 237.

²⁶⁸ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 282.

Rome. Commerce was the one area where Boswell diverged from his idol Rousseau. Boswell's *Account of Corsica* was designed for a British audience. Britain was the most powerful commercial nation in the world. Boswell himself, in contrast to Rousseau, was a firm believer in the strength of trade and commerce. This line of argument developed into a fourth and final phase, in which British intervention on the island was advocated, in order to defend liberty. Boswell was the main campaigner for this approach. The idea of British intervention raised a number of key issues. Should Britain adopt a foreign policy supporting liberty around the globe? Boswell was a firm believer in this policy; he advocated a military alliance with Corsica, in order to defeat the tyrannical Genoese, and later the French. The intrinsic link between British and Corsican liberties created far stronger bonds between nations. Boswell wanted Britain to become the protector of small states threatened by foreign invasion. This had been done previously with both Holland and Switzerland.

The Corsican Revolt raised questions over the nature of foreign policy that Britain should adopt. These debates would be brought into public focus with the French invasion of Corsica in 1768. There was a huge public outcry following the invasion, which has since been dubbed as the 'Corsican crisis'. What position would the British government take? To the disappointment of Boswell and the majority of public opinion, the government did next to nothing to stop the invasion. However, the ideal that Britain was the protector of small states influenced public opinion far more than first anticipated. Failure to intervene led to the fall of the Duke of Grafton's ministry in 1770. Debates over the nature of Britain's foreign policy would continue into the late eighteenth-century. With the growth of the British Empire, there was a crisis of identification. What type of Empire should Britain become? One which defends the liberty of small states, or an Empire devoted entirely to commerce and commodities?

Perhaps most importantly Rousseau (Macaulay less so) and Boswell provided the intellectual basis for British opinion on Corsica throughout the eighteenth century. Their writings would be constantly referenced by many subsequent British writers on Corsica. They created an idea of what Corsica was, and more importantly, the strengths the island could provide for Britain. The main problem was the fact that both Rousseau

and Boswell described an idealized version of Corsica. Boswell in particular painted the image of the Corsicans as freedom loving heroes, devoted to defending their liberties. Paoli was described by many as a modern Homeric hero. These images were, however, were contrary to reality. David Abulafia's book *The Great sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (2011), describes eighteenth century Corsican society as inward looking, 'isolated' and 'conservative'.²⁶⁹ The British began to 'imagine' that Corsica "possessed untapped potential as a naval base".²⁷⁰ This idea was based upon Boswell's *Account of Corsica*, which remained the main source of information for many Britons throughout the eighteenth century. Boswell's book, however, merely provided a romanticised version of Corsica. Abulafia argued that Corsica offered little in terms of naval facilities, and far fewer products for trade than any other island in the Mediterranean.²⁷¹ However, the image of Corsica portrayed by Rousseau and Boswell would persist throughout the eighteenth century: only the eventual British occupation of Corsica in 1794 would dispel this image of the island, as illustrated in the final chapter.

269 David Abulafia, *The Great sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean*, (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 515.

270 Abulafia, *The Great Sea*, 515.

271 Abulafia, *The Great Sea*, 515.

The Corsican crisis in British politics 1768-1769

In February 1768, James Boswell published his *Account of Corsica*. Within the account, Boswell wrote that during wartime, the Corsicans were as “furious as lions; death is esteemed nothing, nor is any power sufficient to make them yield against their inclination”.²⁷² Boswell believed that the Corsicans were great warriors incomparable to any contemporary nation. Boswell’s *Account* was very popular upon its release and propelled the previously obscure island to fame within Britain and, raised a number of issues concerning Britain’s relationship with Corsica. The first chapter examined Boswell’s attempts to seek an alliance with Corsica, by interceding with the British government. Boswell’s plan however was complicated by the fact that the Corsicans were considered ‘rebels’ by their Genoese sovereigns. The focus of the debate changed with the French invasion of Corsica in May 1768, after Genoa transferred sovereignty of the island to France. What action would Britain take concerning the invasion? Arguments for and against intervention in Corsica developed over the next two years. This chapter will look in depth at these debates during the period 1768-1770. The Corsican issue became entangled within the wider political deliberations plaguing the weakened Duke of Grafton ministry. To what degree did the Corsican issue become used by the opposition to attack the government? The lack of government action over Corsica was against the perceived ‘popular’ will. I will explore the extent the Corsican crisis caused the collapse of the Grafton ministry in January 1770, or whether it was merely one of several issues to afflict the government. More importantly, was the failure of Britain to intervene in Corsica the initial chapter for the eventual fall of the First British Empire?

This chapter will look in depth at the arguments that were made for and against intervention in Corsica, between 1768 and 1769. It will also observe the development of the ideas that informed the debates during the Corsican crisis. The first section will study the influence Boswell’s *Account of Corsica* had on the debates which followed, particularly with writers advocating intervention in Corsica. The second section will present the main arguments promoting intervention into Corsica. This will be done by

²⁷² James Boswell, *An Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour of that Island and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli*, 4th ed. (Dublin: Printed for J. Exshaw, 1768), 146.

examining the major published works on Corsica during this period, as well as newspaper articles on the issue. The final section will investigate the arguments against intervention in Corsica, culminating with the government's position on the issue. Why did the British government do nothing to aid the Corsicans despite the public outcry against it? I will attempt to answer the question within this chapter.

The influence of Boswell in developing the argument for intervention in Corsica:
February 1768- May 1768

Boswell's *Account of Corsica* was very popular upon its release. It went through some three editions and four translations before 1800. Its effects were even felt in France. William Henry Nassau de Zuylestein (1717-1781) the Earl of Rochford and British ambassador to France, reported that the Duc of Choiseul (Chief Minister of France 1758-1770) was aware that Boswell's *Account of Corsica* "had made a great noise; that he ordered it to be translated here (Paris), and that it would soon be published".²⁷³ Rochford noted that the publication of Boswell's book in France could be for "no other intent than to show the French of what importance Corsica is".²⁷⁴ Boswell's *Account of Corsica* more importantly propelled Corsica to the top of the British news agenda. The vast increase in newspaper articles on Corsica from 1768 to 1770 was staggering. On average, more articles were written about Corsica in one month in 1768 or 1769 than in the entire year of 1767. Corsica became one of the main topics of significance during these years. An example of Boswell's influence was seen in the 4 April 1768 edition of the *Gazetteer*. The newspaper claimed some letters from Corsica seemed to determine that nothing was more 'eagerly' desired by the islanders than "the establishment of a legal power over them, on the model of the British Constitution".²⁷⁵ It was hoped that this action would give Corsica "more weight and consequence in the eyes of all Europe".²⁷⁶ The *Gazetteer* promoted Boswell's idea of pursuing an alliance with Corsica. However, the article went further suggesting that the Britain's constitution should be established as Corsica's constitution. This idea derived from the belief that the English constitution, established in 1688-1689, was the most superior in the world. The main aim of Boswell's *Account of Corsica* was to repeal the proclamation made

²⁷³ SP 78/275, Rochford to Shelburne, 2 June 1768.

²⁷⁴ SP 78/275, Rochford to Shelburne, 2 June 1768.

²⁷⁵ "To the Printer of the Gazetteer", *Gazetteer and new Daily Advertiser*, 4 April, 1768, Issue 12195.

²⁷⁶ *Gazetteer*, 4 April, 1768.

by the British government in 1763, which forbade any British subjects “to have any intercourse with that nation”.²⁷⁷

At the Peace of Paris in 1763, which ended the Seven Years War (1756-1763), a clause was added preventing any British intervention in favour of the Corsican rebels. This was done according to French interest and that of her ally Genoa. The 17 May edition of the *Gazetteer* asked what principle of policy “are we prohibited to have any intercourse with them [Corsica]”?²⁷⁸ Trade was meant to be the “great object” of Britain.²⁷⁹ The writer of the article referenced Lord Lyttelton’s ‘masterly history’ *The History of the Life of Henry the Second* (1767–1771) to support their argument. George Lyttelton (1709-1773) was perhaps most famous for his ‘patriot’ politics during the 1730s, and his opposition to Robert Walpole (1676-1745), the first Prime Minister. Lyttelton was also a known supporter of the Corsican cause. In a letter sent to Boswell dated 21 February 1768, Lyttelton commented that the government should “have shown more respect for Corsican liberty, and [I] think it disgraces our nation”.²⁸⁰ Lyttelton’s *History of Henry the Second* was his life’s work, which he engaged with intermittently for some thirty years. Lyttelton argued that Henry II (1133-1189) was glad to have a trade treaty with the Muslim king of Valencia and Murcia. Henry II’s reflection was that a “treaty of commerce, which might open to his people any new source of wealth, was equivalent to a conquest”.²⁸¹ Examples within Britain’s past were constantly used by English writers to justify any course of action or lack thereof regarding Corsica. The writer of this article expanded on Boswell’s argument concerning Corsica’s economic importance. However, the writer viewed these commercial benefits entirely from a British perspective.

French invasion of Corsica May 1768: Beginning of the Corsican crisis

Before May 1768, the aim for those writing on Corsica had been to promote trade and an alliance with the islanders. The nature of debates about Corsica changed when

²⁷⁷ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 135.

²⁷⁸ “To the Printer of the *Gazetteer*”, *Gazetteer*, 17 May 1768, Issue 12232.

²⁷⁹ *Gazetteer*, 17 May, 1768.

²⁸⁰ George Lyttelton, “From Lord Lyttelton, Sunday 21 February 1768”, *The General Correspondence of James Boswell 1766-1769*, vol. 2, 1768-1769, ed. Richard Cole, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1997), 29-30.

²⁸¹ *Gazetteer*, 17 May, 1768.

Genoa transferred sovereignty of the island to France on 15 May 1768. French troops invaded the island over the following months. The stakes were raised; should Britain risk war with France to protect the Corsicans? Debates over Corsica became split between those who advocated for and against military intervention. I will now focus on the writings promoting intervention on Corsica. One of the first major published writings on the issue was the anonymously published *A Letter to the Right Honourable, The Earl of Shelburne* (1768). In Boswell's correspondence, Joseph Cawthorne claimed to "have written several pamphlets particularly two or three letters", including the *Letter to the Earl of Shelburne*.²⁸² Cawthorne claimed to have been 'animated' by Boswell's "generous example", in favour of the "brave but neglected and oppressed Corsicans".²⁸³ Cawthorne also claimed to have written an essay, signed 'Cosmopolite' and published in Boswell's *British Essays in Favour of the Brave Corsicans* (1769). This, however, contradicted Boswell's notes, which claimed that particular essay was written by his good friend Sir John Dick, consul to Leghorn.²⁸⁴ What also should be noted is the reason why Cawthorne wrote to Boswell. Cawthorne claimed that he was in a "starving condition"; despite being "personally unknown" to Boswell, he implored for some "little pecuniary assistance to relive a distressed compatriot".²⁸⁵ Cawthorne attempted to appeal to Boswell through a shared interest and support for the Corsican rebels. We simply cannot trust Cawthorne's claim that he was the author of *A letter to the Earl of Shelburne*. Hence for this particular chapter, I shall refer to the author anonymously.

William Petty (1737-1805) the Earl of Shelburne, was Secretary of State for the Southern department in the Grafton Ministry. The writer, who styled themselves as 'The Author' stated that ministers were meant to be the 'guardians' of the state and "ought to be inspired with the passions of the community".²⁸⁶ This sentiment suggested that there was a perceived split between the government and the 'common people' regarding Corsica. The British government appeared to show a disconcerting lack of

282 Joseph Cawthorne, 'From Joseph Cawthorne, 22 September 1769', *The General Correspondence of James Boswell*, vol. 2, 237.

283 Cawthorne, 'From Joseph Cawthorne, 22 September 1769', 237.

284 Cawthorne, 'From Joseph Cawthorne, 22 September 1769', 237.

285 Cawthorne, 'From Joseph Cawthorne, 22 September 1769', 238.

286 *A Letter to the Right Honourable, The Earl of Shelburne*, (London: Printed for W. Flexney, 1768), 1.

interest in the Corsican issue. The writer recognised this perception, and intended to rectify it, by writing a letter directly to one of the leading ministers of state. Ironically, as Shelburne's later actions would show, he was one of the few ministers of state who wanted intervention in Corsica. Perhaps the author wrote directly to Shelburne, simply because they believed that the Mediterranean area "belongs to your Lordships department in the state".²⁸⁷

The main issue for the writer was the Mediterranean trade, which required "immediate attention". The author used the Newfoundland trade as an example to illustrate their argument. The writer explained that the fisheries at Newfoundland were "inexpressibly valuable to Great Britain".²⁸⁸ They estimated that the export of pilchards and red herrings brought an annual acquisition of 136,000L to the treasury.²⁸⁹ These two branches of fishery depended "almost entirely upon our commerce to the Mediterranean seas".²⁹⁰ Therefore, if Britain lost control of the straits trade to France "we should lose that part of our Newfoundland trade too".²⁹¹ The writer attempted to make Shelburne aware of the far ranging effects the loss of the Mediterranean trade could have on Britain's commerce. Loss of the Newfoundland trade would also affect Dartmouth, which "depends entirely upon the Newfoundland fishery", as would both Bristol and London.²⁹² Commerce was an interconnected system; the loss of one area of trade would affect another. The Newfoundland trade was "threatened by the invasion of Corsica, and the sovereignty of the Mediterranean seas ceded to the French".²⁹³ The strategic importance of Corsica required the utmost attention. Control of the island could determine who commanded the entire Mediterranean trade. The author criticised persons of the higher order and their "sleepy disposition".²⁹⁴ They criticised the ministers "dreaming of a general peace, so suitable to their want of national virtue", which made them "thoughtless in activity".²⁹⁵ This was one of the first major attacks of the government's policy regarding Corsica. Their 'inactivity' was seen

287 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 4.

288 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 7.

289 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 9.

290 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne* 11.

291 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 11.

292 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 17.

293 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 16.

294 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 18.

295 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 18.

as a sign that ministers had no “national pride” and therefore they were the “shame to all such Britons”.²⁹⁶ Many Britons believed that weakness of action by any government regarding foreign policy meant they were unpatriotic. Numerous British writers during this period still recalled the impressive victories gained during the recent Seven Years War. The author argued that Shelburne was of opposite character to these ministers, who could justify to state: “I have an honest fame”.²⁹⁷ This was the main reason why the writer addressed their letter to Shelburne.

The *Letter to the Earl of Shelburne* also contained a far more obvious anti-French bias than any previous British writings on Corsica. This was principally due to the French invasion of Corsica in May 1768. France was the primary adversary of Britain during the eighteenth century. They were different not only through religion, but also their varying political systems. Many Britons believed that France’s arbitrary government that had to be opposed at all costs. This was in contrast to the boundless advantages provided by the British constitution. Both nations had fought a series of wars throughout the century, and after the end of the Seven Years War many Britons thought it only a matter of time before hostilities resumed. Therefore, any strategic advantage that could be gained over the enemy during the peacetime was highly sought after. Corsica in French possession was a grave threat to British interests. This was reflected in the *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, when the writer argued that Corsica in French hands added “so much power to our enemy”.²⁹⁸ Any gain by France was perceived to be a loss for Britain. The writer recognised that Shelburne was eager “to promote the vast designs of this superior trading Kingdom” against the House of Bourbon and allies.²⁹⁹ The ‘House of Bourbon’ or the ‘family compact’ referred to both France and Spain. The author of the *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne* even went so far as to claim that the Spaniards “differ only in name with Frenchmen”.³⁰⁰ English writers believed that Spain would always follow French foreign policy, so there was no need to differentiate between the two nations. The Author saw the cessation of Corsica as a “great act of hostility against Great Britain” and any other power concerned about

²⁹⁶ *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 18.

²⁹⁷ *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 18.

²⁹⁸ *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 19.

²⁹⁹ *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 23.

³⁰⁰ *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 11.

commerce and peace in Europe.³⁰¹ France was a “monster” of “ignorance and insolence, ambition and venality, stupidity and subservience”.³⁰² French involvement in Corsica made the island a major issue in Britain.

What did the writer of the *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne* believe should be done regarding Corsica? They wished for Shelburne to support the ‘great measure’ for “the preservation of Corsica” and to assist “the Corsicans immediately”.³⁰³ This would be achieved by immediately “revoking the prohibition of commerce with Corsica”.³⁰⁴ The writer referred to the prohibition made by the British government in 1763 which banned any aid or contact with the Corsican rebels. Revoking the probation would enable Britain to supply “the Corsicans with the necessary ammunition and money”.³⁰⁵ Many individual Britons had already adopted this measure: Subscriptions of money and arms were sent by many Britons during 1768 and 1769. Government support however would provide a far greater quantity of arms and money. The author then suggested that the government send “a squadron of observation” to aid Corsica in the Mediterranean rather than a ‘powerful fleet’.³⁰⁶ The writer referred to ‘previous embarrassment of ventures’ as the reason for not sending a ‘powerful fleet’ to Corsica. What ‘embarrassments’ the author was referring to is difficult to determine. The writer stopped short of recommending the landing of British troops on the island to aid the Corsicans. They believed the brave islanders were “animated with the noble spirit of true patriotism”, and therefore did not need any other support beyond what was recommended.³⁰⁷ Such was their faith in the fighting spirit of the brave Corsican patriots.

Perhaps most interesting was that the author hoped to find in Shelburne support “as warm in the cause of Corsica, as others have been in that of Hanover”.³⁰⁸ Hanover was in personal union with Britain after George I of Hanover became king of Great Britain

301 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 40.

302 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 41.

303 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 21.

304 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 24.

305 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 24.

306 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 24.

307 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 25.

308 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 27.

in 1714. The writer argued that Hanover “costs much and produces nothing to Great Britain” in contrast to the numerous commercial advantages that could be gained with Corsica.³⁰⁹ Support of Corsica would enable Shelburne to make his name “as illustrious in the annals of all European nations as that of the victorious Marlborough”.³¹⁰ The author referred to a time when Britain was the main player in European politics during the War of Spanish Succession (1702-1714), led by the victorious general, the Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722). The writer wished for Britain to play such a role again.

The author concluded his *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne* with ominous predictions for the future. France, Spain and Austria, with the aid of Tuscany and Naples, would in due time “swallow up the little potentates of Italy, and entirely abolish and take possession of them”.³¹¹ Even the Pope’s ecclesiastical domain was under threat from the Bourbon powers. The writer believed that Britain should form a ‘powerful confederacy’ with the Pope, King of Sardinia, Duke of Savoy, the Venetians and the Corsicans, to counter the Bourbon compact. They seemed to endorse a policy promoting the existence of small states, in order to “preserve the peace of Europe permanently”.³¹² Britain had historically supported small states such as Portugal and Holland in order to counterbalance the power of her domineering neighbours. What was more surprising was that the writer argued for a connection with the Pope. This seems to go against the Protestant spirit endorsed by the 1688 Revolution.³¹³ The author justified this ‘unusual’ connection by explaining that mutual interest “is the strongest tie and the surest bond of national friendship”.³¹⁴ The author argued that it was no more “unnatural or incongruous to be connected politically with the pope” than with any other power.³¹⁵ Interest or commerce should dictate British policy with foreign powers. However, using the case study of Corsica, I argue that something else also dictated British policy from 1760: the promotion of liberty and the British constitution across the globe.

309 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 28.

310 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 27.

311 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 44.

312 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 47.

313 See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (London: Pimlico, 1992), and Tony Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England 1660-1760*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), for their ideas about Britain’s Protestant ideology during the first half of the eighteenth century.

314 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 47.

315 *Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*, 48.

The ‘Corsican crisis’: a tool for the opposition of government?

A letter to The Earl of Shelburne illustrated that there was a perceived separation of ideas between the British literate classes and the government. The government’s inaction over the French invasion of Corsica irked many writers and supporters of the island. Opposition writers began to use Corsica as a way to attack the government. The Earl of Chatham (or William Pitt the elder) was the actual Prime Minister at this time, although due to ill health, the Duke of Grafton was the acting Prime Minister (becoming the Prime Minister in November 1768). The Grafton ministry in 1768 was not in the best condition, facing a number of other issues besides Corsica. There was major unrest in the American colonies, caused primarily by an increase in taxation following the Seven Years War. This was directly linked to another major problem faced by the government: the growth of the national debt. Britain amassed large war debts following the Seven Years War and the British government had attempted to pay them off by directly taxing the American colonies for the first time.

Many writers during the eighteenth century expressed fears over the growth of Britain’s debts, particularly during the 1770s with the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War.³¹⁶ There was a general belief that Britain’s debts were a sign of weakness, foreshadowing greater disaster in the future. The other major issue at the time was the divisive John Wilkes, a libertine and self-proclaimed champion of “the middling and inferior class of people, who stand in most need of protection”.³¹⁷ Wilkes was imprisoned at Kings Bench Prison in May 1768, for a seditious libel made against the content of the King’s Speech which had endorsed the Peace of Paris treaty in 1763. Wilkes had originally fled to Paris, only to return in 1768 to stand for parliament. Despite his election as member for Middlesex, he was still imprisoned and subsequently expelled from Parliament. Wilkes, in a letter to his Middlesex supporters, claimed that he would petition parliament in the hope of a “redress of all my grievances, which have arisen from various acts of arbitrary power exerted by the

316 See Richard Price’s “Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution”, and Anne-Robert Turgot’s “Letter from M. Turgot” in *Richard Price and the Ethical Foundations of the American Revolution*, for best illustration of the arguments against Britain’s debt during the American Revolutionary War.

317 *Annual Register or a view of the History, Politics and Literature for the Year 1763*, 6th ed. (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, 1790), 139.

ministers”.³¹⁸ For a nation that prided itself on liberty, the greatest fear was that the government could become the antithesis to what Britain was supposed to stand for. The treatment of Wilkes encapsulated those fears.

The major opposition newspapers used the Corsican issue on many occasions to illustrate the weakness of the government in matters of foreign policy. News about Corsica appeared within the foreign sections of the newspapers, usually under the heading ‘London’. This generally meant the source of the item rather than its actual subject. News on foreign items was frequently gathered from the post imported from both France and Holland into London. Jeremy Black’s book *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (1987) deals specifically with foreign policy news that appeared in British newspapers. Black notes that British newspapers “clearly regarded reports about foreign affairs as of the greatest importance”.³¹⁹ Most newspapers attempted to provide the best possible ‘foreign advices’, yet the question remains: to what degree can we trust the content of eighteenth century British newspapers? They often contained contradictory reports and were sometimes subject to error. Editors accepted that the necessity of printing items as they arrived could lead to mistake, and would sometimes note their scepticism about certain items in circulation, but would leave it to the reader to judge an article’s authenticity. For this particular chapter, the newspapers are a medium for gauging the public discussion of Corsica during this period. Black noted the importance of foreign news “in the politically sensitive debates over foreign policy that occupied most of the country”.³²⁰ There was a partisan nature to most of the political press, as newspapers would provide favourable reports according to their own political values. This will be illustrated with the case of Corsica.

The *Westminster Journal* was one of the main opposition papers in 1768. Its 11 June edition claimed that the ‘brave Corsicans’ had offered to submit to the British government: “Thane (however) refused their submission, calling those glorious sons of liberty, a rebellious and factious people”.³²¹ ‘Thane’ referred to the old name for a

318 *Annual Register or a view of the History, Politics and Literature for the Year 1768*, 5th ed. (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, 1796), 183.

319 Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century*, (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 199.

320 Black, *The English Press*, 205.

321 “London intelligence”, *Westminster Journal*, 11 June, 1768, Issue 1225.

nobleman in Anglo-Saxon England. If the government were willing to abandon the Corsicans, it proved that “Thane will sacrifice every virtue to the idol of arbitrary power”.³²² This sentiment highlighted the perceived corruption within the political system, exemplified by the treatment of John Wilkes. The 25 June edition of the *Westminster Journal* bemoaned the lack of British action regarding the French invasion of Corsica. The paper argued that England “busies herself so much in affairs of no moment, that she has not time to spare to consult the benefit of nations”.³²³ Britain’s internal problems were distracting the nation from its main purpose: the protection of allied small states abroad. The 1 October edition of the *Westminster Journal* compiled a number of letters from Leghorn. ‘Leghorn’ referred to Livorno, the nearest port to Corsica in mainland Italy (see appendix 1). These letters indicated that the French possess “very great advantages over the Corsicans”.³²⁴ Despite France’s considerable military advantage, the newspaper nonetheless hoped “for the encouragement of liberty and bravery, and the discouragement of tyranny and oppression in all parts of the world”.³²⁵ The article believed that Britain should lead the promotion of liberty across the globe. Corsica was used as an example where the British government had not lived up to this ambition. More specifically, it had failed aid a fellow brother nation of liberty. This gave the impression to many opposition newspapers that the British government secretly supported arbitrary government.

The most famous opposition items to appear during the period 1768-1770 were the Junius letters. The Junius letters were published in the *Public Advertiser* from January 1769 to September 1771. Each letter was usually signed with the name Junius, the middle name of Lucius Junius Brutus, who overthrew the Roman Kings of antiquity. There has been considerable speculation as to the Junius’ identity. The most widely accepted culprit is Sir Philip Francis (1740-1818), a Whig politician and a clerk of the War Office from 1762 until 1772. For this chapter however, the identity of the author is not our concern. The impact of the Junius letters was certainly widely felt, and many newspapers and writers referenced them. The Junius letters epitomized the general grievances against the government during this period. In the first letter, Junius argued

³²² *Westminster Journal*, 11 June, 1768.

³²³ “Public affairs: or, the History of Europe”, *Westminster Journal*, 25 June 1768, Issue 1227.

³²⁴ “Letters from Leghorn”, *Westminster Journal*, 1 October, 1768, Issue 1231.

³²⁵ *Westminster Journal*, 1 October, 1768.

that “while the national honour is firmly maintained abroad, and while justice is impartially administered at home, the obedience of the subject will be voluntary, cheerful, and, I might almost say, unlimited”.³²⁶ The problems facing the government boiled down to two fundamental issues: the failure of foreign policy concerning both America and Corsica, and the perceived corruption of the political system (epitomized by Wilkes). Loyalty for an Englishman meant “a rational attachment to the guardian of the laws”.³²⁷ The protection of the Britain’s political system and the maintenance of liberty were the most important ideals for law abiding Englishmen.

Where does the Corsican issue feature within the Junius letters? Corsica was referenced in Junius’ criticisms of the government on several occasions. However, the Corsican issue was usually listed among many other problems plaguing the government. In Junius’ third letter to the *Public Advertiser* on 7 February 1769, Junius listed that “the assertions of the colonies have been alienated... Corsica shamefully abandoned... commerce languishes” and “public credit is threatened with a new debt”.³²⁸ Corsica was merely a tool to attack the government’s foreign policy. Opposition to the government, and the Duke of Grafton in particular, preoccupied most of the Junius letters. The twelfth letter of Junius published in the 30 May 1769 edition of the *Public Advertiser*, devoted the most attention to the Corsican issue. Junius, addressing Grafton directly in the letter, argued that the French had seen the weaknesses in a distracted British ministry, and were therefore justified in “treating you with contempt”.³²⁹ Junius stated to Grafton that Britain either could suffer the French to make an acquisition of Corsica, “the importance of which you probably no conception of”, or oppose them by underhand management.³³⁰ This referred to the discreet support of Corsica through arms and supply, which Junius believed had disgraced Britain in the eyes of Europe. The image Britain presented of itself to other nations in Europe was important for many Britons. Strong decisive measures would increase her prestige, and therefore her diplomatic position. The transition from indiscreet assistance to more decisive measures was ‘unavoidable’. Junius concluded

326 “Junius to the Printer of the Public Advertiser”, *Public Advertiser*, 21 January 1769, Issue 10681.

327 *Public Advertiser*, 21 January, 1769.

328 “To Sir William Draper, knight of the bath”, *Public Advertiser*, 7 February, 1769, Issue 10695.

329 “To his Grace the Duke of Grafton”, *Public Advertiser*, 30 May, 1769, Issue 10787.

330 *Public Advertiser*, 30 May, 1769.

that if the government had acted with more surety, Corsica could have been saved “without expense or danger”.³³¹ The actions of the British government in Corsica came from a position of weakness rather than strength. Junius epitomized the main opposition writers during this period, who used the lack of action over Corsica as a tool to criticise the government.

James Boswell: *British Essays in Favour of the Brave Corsicans*

Boswell was the champion of the Corsican cause in Britain. A visit to Corsica in 1765 had a profound impact on the young Boswell giving him a cause to fight for and sparking his literary career. His second major publication during this period was his *British Essays in Favour of the Brave Corsicans* (1769) where he attempted to reinvigorate the Corsican cause in Britain. The illustration on the front page of the book encapsulates the point Boswell wanted to make. The image (see Appendix 2) shows Britannia holding her shield over the head of Corsica as her protector. The words underneath the image highlight the message: *Magna Britannia Corsican Protegit*. Within the preface, Boswell explained that the “wise” in many foreign courts had foreseen the fall of Corsica to France and “its consequences, and have wished to interfere before it should be too late”.³³² However, all the nations of Europe “have fixed their attention on Great Britain, as the power most concerned” of the actions of her rival and “constant enemy”.³³³ Boswell’s *Essays*, in contrast to his *Account of Corsica*, focused far more on the threat posed by France. This is only natural given that his *Account of Corsica* was written before the French invasion of Corsica.

Boswell claimed that France, with the conquest of Corsica, would acquire “command of the Mediterranean trade, and [is] preparing, in the most effectual manner, for a successful war”.³³⁴ An attack on Corsica was almost like an assault on Britain itself; Corsica was merely the first step for France to rebuild her strength following the Seven Years War. These predictions would ultimately prove correct with the French intervention in the War of American Independence (1775-1783) only six years later.

³³¹ *Public Advertiser*, 30 May, 1769.

³³² Ed James Boswell, “Preface”, *British Essays in Favour of the Brave Corsicans: by Several Hands*, (London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, 1769), vi.

³³³ Boswell, “Preface”, *British Essays*, vi.

³³⁴ Boswell, “Preface”, *British Essays*, vii.

Corsica was for Boswell an important object “hitherto overlooked by our ministry”.³³⁵ He noted the distractions in the colonies and the “divisions and lawless riots at home”.³³⁶ The constitution, which gave union and firmness to the whole body of the British Empire, had not much “vigour” left. In contrast to those at “the helm of our state”, many writers on Corsica had shown that “the spirit of Britons is not yet gone from them”.³³⁷ Boswell acknowledged the divergence in opinion that had occurred between the government and opposition writers on Corsica, and it no longer represented their views on the matter. Boswell referenced letters from the city of London, written to the Earl of Hillsborough and Earl of Chatham which shared the “same laudable zeal for the Corsicans” as himself.³³⁸ He also included the previously discussed *Letter To The Earl of Shelburne* as a further example of this ‘zeal’ for the Corsican cause.

Boswell explained that some of the essays gathered were written by himself, some by a ‘highly respectable’ gentleman and a friend involved in politics. Many of those writing on Corsica, including those I have already covered, remained anonymous. This was mainly due to the aforementioned proclamation of 1763, forbidding Britons from any contact or aid to the Corsicans. Anonymity remained the only option for many wishing to write in favour of the Corsican cause. Boswell however remained the obvious exception: perhaps his fame and eminence prevented his persecution. Boswell noted that a greater part of the essays were written by “persons unknown to me”.³³⁹ During my research, I managed to find a number of the essays used by Boswell, published in certain British newspapers. Boswell accumulated a large collection of essays in order to offer a complete a cross-section of the arguments and debates on Corsica. The aim of the essays was to vindicate “the people of Great Britain from a charge of inattention or pusillanimity, which the people do not deserve”.³⁴⁰ To Boswell, the government did not represent the true opinion of the British nation concerning Corsica.

335 Boswell, “Preface”, *British Essays*, vii.

336 Boswell, “Preface”, *British Essays*, vii.

337 Boswell, “Preface”, *British Essays*, viii.

338 Boswell, “Preface”, *British Essays*, viii.

339 Boswell, “Preface”, *British Essays*, ix.

340 Boswell, “Preface”, *British Essays*, xii.

A glance at the contents page of Boswell's collection of essays shows a broad range of arguments and ideas concerning Corsica. The majority of the essays were written in 1768 by a wide variety of writers, none of whom gave their actual names. However, they usually named themselves after their occupation or where the essay was written. This can give us a clue to the background and occupation of the writers involved. For example, one writer called themselves 'An English Merchant', and another left their initials A.A of Parliament-Street, which suggested someone of a political background. The essays cover a wide range of arguments promoting intervention in Corsica, including: the commercial and trade benefits possessed by the island; the desire to prevent France gaining an important strategic advantage over Britain; and the aspiration to aid a fellow brother of liberty against tyrannical rule. The first issue has already been covered at length in this chapter, so I will focus on the essays covering the latter two issues.

I shall begin with the essays arguing that Britain's primary objective should be to stop France from gaining the island of Corsica. I have already briefly discussed the anti-French sentiment found in *A Letter to The Earl of Shelburne*. This stemmed from the belief that Britain and France were eternal enemies, locked in perpetual warfare. Essay III argued that the acquisition of Corsica by the French "would justly alarm mankind".³⁴¹ Corsica under French rule would "facilitate the universal monarchy which the house of Bourbon has so long pursued".³⁴² The language of 'universal monarchy' would be familiar to Englishmen at the beginning of the eighteenth century, during the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715). Many Englishmen believed that since Louis XIV's reign, France had held designs for the domination of Europe. The acquisition of Corsica would make "France mistress of the Mediterranean".³⁴³ Attacks on Toulon by Britain usually distracted the French fleet; the acquisition of Corsica meant that this was no longer possible. France would then be able to 'double' their efforts against Germany and Holland. The writer, calling themselves Monitor, compared the French conquest of Corsica to the acquisition of Lorraine in 1766. These two acquisitions confirmed that France was once again building her strength following the disastrous

341 Boswell, "Essay III", *British Essays*, 11.

342 Boswell, "Essay III", *British Essays*, 12.

343 Boswell, "Essay III", *British Essays*, 12.

Seven Years War. Monitor estimated that Lorraine would provide France with some 30,000 extra fighting men and Corsica 40,000.³⁴⁴ The means by which the writer calculated these statistics remain unclear. However, the statistical ‘evidence’ served a purpose: France with Lorraine and Corsica was undeniably stronger. The fear of the French acquiring Corsica was ever linked to the commercial consequences of the conquest for Britain.

Opposition to French imperialism overlapped with the other major reason for intervention in Corsica: the protection of liberty. Essay VIII compared both French and British attitudes to Corsica. The writer argued that the nation was ‘alarmed’ at the inactivity of the English ministry toward Corsica. Whilst France “patronises tyranny” England must “protect liberty”.³⁴⁵ According to the writer, it was “glorious to succour the oppressed than oppressors”.³⁴⁶ The writer argued that Britain should pursue a foreign policy that entailed the protection of liberty across the world, and warned that any delays by the British government would promote “indifference and disregard for the cause of liberty, and fear the honour of the nation, which will be generally and violently resented by the public”.³⁴⁷ Liberty was intertwined with the ‘honour’ of the nation. The writer argued that the public invariably supported the cause of liberty around the world. Good policy required the “most diligent and spirited attention to satisfy the inclinations of the people”.³⁴⁸ If the “administration suffers liberty to be oppressed, both at home and abroad”, the only result would be the “total annihilation of all popular respect”.³⁴⁹ The writer acknowledged the growing gulf between the public’s ‘inclinations’ and the policy of government. The protection of liberty should be the main endeavour for all British foreign policy.

In Essay II, the author who called themselves ‘An English Merchant’ argued that examples in Britain’s history highlighted occasions when the country had assisted fellow nations of liberty. Queen Elizabeth’s policy of aiding the United Provinces helped “us to support the balance of Europe, and maintain our own liberties from

344 Boswell, “Essay III”, *British Essays*, 17.

345 Boswell “Essay VIII”, *British Essays*, 51.

346 Boswell, “Essay VIII”, *British Essays*, 51.

347 Boswell, “Essay VIII”, *British Essays*, 52.

348 Boswell, “Essay VIII”, *British Essays*, 52.

349 Boswell, “Essay VIII”, *British Essays*, 53.

French slavery”.³⁵⁰ French tyranny was the antithesis of British liberty. The aid to Holland was an example of where sovereign power could be used “to interfere in support of the privileges of their neighbouring people”, according to “the law of nature and nations”.³⁵¹ Liberty and its protection were linked to the very laws of nature. This particular essay was written in April 1768 before the French invasion and the writer, addressing the Genoese, argued that they could not object Britain aiding the Corsicans, when they themselves had “broke through all their privileges and all the laws of humanity”.³⁵² This sentiment implied that Britain could intervene when a sovereign power threatened the liberties and privileges of their subject peoples. By what means could Britain define when a foreign nation betrayed the privileges and liberties of their subjects?

The Corsicans, according to ‘An Englishman’, “are a brave generous people, and like Englishmen, struggling for liberty”.³⁵³ Boswell had already argued that Corsica’s liberty was similar to Britain’s. The writer of Essay X determined that “upon the same principle on which this brave nation (Corsica) has acted, was the Revolution (in 1688) founded; which freed as from arbitrary power and superstition”.³⁵⁴ Corsican liberty was identical to that enjoyed by “the glorious patriots of 1688”.³⁵⁵ The author hearkened back to a more pure form of liberty enjoyed in Britain. Englishmen who enjoyed “the blessings of that transaction” were “bound to convince half the world, by supporting Corsica, that we, the children of those men, are not unworthy to reap the harvest, that by their virtue and abilities they have left us”.³⁵⁶ If Britain did not aid Corsica, they would have betrayed the principles which the Revolution of 1688 had been founded upon, and diminish the nation’s prestige in the eyes of Europe. Britain was founded upon the principles of liberty and freedom, and was therefore expected by those at home and abroad, to act and save a fellow nation striving for liberty.

350 Boswell, “Essay II”, *British Essays*, 7.

351 Boswell, “Essay II”, *British Essays*, 9.

352 Boswell, “Essay II”, *British Essays*, 9.

353 Boswell, “Essay V”, *British Essays*, 29.

354 Boswell, “Essay X”, *British Essays*, 63.

355 Boswell, “Essay X”, *British Essays*, 64.

356 Boswell, “Essay X”, *British Essays*, 64.

The final essay of Boswell's book, Essay XX, argued that the "liberty of a whole nation of heroes, and the command of the Mediterranean navigation" were far too precious to be sacrificed.³⁵⁷ The writer, who called themselves Regulus, claimed to be a "true friend of liberty". However, control of the Mediterranean was also a major reason to intervene on the island. The writer of Essay X also noted that any attempt to increase the Mediterranean trade "must be our interest to follow".³⁵⁸ Despite the claims made by many British writers that they were avid supporters of Corsican liberty, the commercial interests of Britain never seemed to be far from their thoughts. What must be remembered is that many of these essays were published in British newspapers and written for a wider audience: they were attempting to convince readers to support the Corsican cause. Any commercial advantages that could be obtained were usually gleefully taken up by British merchants. Britain was first and foremost a commercial nation, and her policy was usually dictated by that fact. An interesting question to ask is whether Britain would have supported a nation struggling for liberty in a backwater country, with no potential for commercial advantage? Would there be the same reaction as there was for Corsica?

However, the ideal of liberty was itself a strong motivator for many Britons. Regulus in Essay XX argued that war had been declared against liberty, and the British "who glory in their principles of freedom, are determined to support it".³⁵⁹ An attack on any fellow brother nation of liberty was an assault on Britain itself. Regulus commented that it was in Britain's character to react against France. Rome and Carthage "were as much rivals as Britain and France are".³⁶⁰ The writer concluded by writing that any future war with France "may be as glorious to Great Britain as the last [Seven Years War]".³⁶¹ The possibility of a 'glorious' war with France was one that was not relished by many other Britons, as will be explored in the latter sections of this chapter.

357 Boswell, "Essay XX", *British Essays*, 130.

358 Boswell, "Essay X", *British Essays*, 65.

359 Boswell, "Essay XX", *British Essays*, 130.

360 Boswell, "Essay XX", *British Essays*, 135.

361 Boswell, "Essay XX", *British Essays*, 136.

A Eurocentric British foreign policy?

Before looking into the arguments against intervention in Corsica, I would like to bring to the attention of the reader some of the broader ideas behind British attitudes to foreign policy during the eighteenth century. Within Boswell's *British Essays*, one particular essay raised far broader questions concerning British foreign policy. The writer of Essay IX called themselves 'A.A, from Parliament-Street'. This suggested someone from a governmental background, who immersed themselves with the key political problems facing the British state. The writer 'A.A' commented that Britain had experienced for many years "that liberty which the Romans once gloried in".³⁶² The many conquests by Britain in the Seven Years War "made the name of Britain to be respected by every foreign power".³⁶³ Britain was a modern Rome and was "revered in every quarter of the globe".³⁶⁴ However, "discontent dwells in the breasts of many", as those in Britain cast a "jealous eye on the extensive continent across the Atlantic".³⁶⁵ The writer referenced the continuing problems with the American colonies, and argued that they were caused by the jealousy of Britain regarding America's superior form of liberty. Corsica was now 'rearing up' its head in Europe and "struggling for liberty".³⁶⁶ The writer argued that British attentions surely must be diverted from America, to the cause of a naturally "brave and warlike people" similar to both Rome and Britain.³⁶⁷ The writer noted that recently, an opulent merchant in London had left a considerable fortune to Corsica for "no other motive but a regard to liberty".³⁶⁸ These 'patriotic actions' distinguished "the man, the patriot and the true friend of liberty".³⁶⁹ Corsica rather than America should become the main focus for British foreign policy.

Essay IX in Boswell's book raised two important issues: the wish for a more Eurocentric foreign policy: and the idea that Britain was in perpetual decline following the Seven Years War. I shall deal with each issue in detail, starting with the historiographical debates on Britain's role in Europe during the eighteenth century.

362 Boswell, "Essay IX", *British Essays*, 56.

363 Boswell, "Essay IX", *British Essays*, 56.

364 Boswell, "Essay IX", *British Essays*, 55.

365 Boswell, "Essay IX", *British Essays*, 56.

366 Boswell, "Essay IX", *British Essays*, 57.

367 Boswell, "Essay IX", *British Essays*, 57.

368 Boswell, "Essay IX", *British Essays*, 58.

369 Boswell, "Essay IX", *British Essays*, 59.

Dooohan Ahn (combining with Brendan Simms) recently wrote an article called *European Great power politics in British public discourse, 1714-1763* (2013). Ahn argues that foreign policy within eighteenth century Britain “drove most aspects of domestic policy”.³⁷⁰ There was a ‘primacy of foreign policy’ within parliamentary and pamphlet debates, which demonstrates “the salience of the issue”.³⁷¹ Jeremy Black also argues that foreign affairs similarly dominated many articles in Britain’s newspapers.³⁷² Ahn agrees with Black of the “centrality of European over colonial and maritime concerns”.³⁷³ The public’s preoccupation with foreign policy, especially with Europe, was a legacy of the seventeenth century, when the maintenance of the European balance of power was “essential to the preservation to their own liberty and security”.³⁷⁴ In 1694, the licensing act was allowed to lapse “effectively ending censorship”.³⁷⁵ This created an immediate boom in journalism, and a “new appetite for commercial and diplomatic news”.³⁷⁶ The newspapers could hold parliament to account over matters in Europe, eventually developing into a situation where the political nation “owned English grand strategy”.³⁷⁷ More importantly, ministries rose and fell over how well the king or the political nation “felt they had performed in the strategic sphere”.³⁷⁸ This was particularly relevant for the Corsican issue, and the question of whether the failure to intervene in Corsica led to the collapse of the Grafton ministry.

Ahn notes that from the early to mid eighteenth century, British policy and politics were “largely shaped by the European states system”.³⁷⁹ He comments that from 1749 to 1763 with the end of the Seven Years War, it has been “commonly accepted that colonial concerns were coming increasingly to the fore”.³⁸⁰ This went against the ‘Eurocentric’ focus of many Britons during the eighteenth century. For his research,

370 Dooohan Ahn and Brendan Simms, “European Great Power politics in British political discourse, 1714-1763”, *The Primacy of Foreign Policy in British History 1660-2000*, ed. William Mulligan and Brendan Simms, (Chippenham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 79.

371 Ahn, “European Great Power Politics”, 79.

372 Black, *The English press*: see pages 197-203 on the importance of foreign policy within British newspapers.

373 Ahn, “European Great Power Politics”, 80.

374 Ahn, “European Great Power Politics”, 80.

375 Ahn, “European Great Power Politics”, 80.

376 Ahn, “European Great Power Politics”, 80.

377 Ahn, “European Great Power Politics”, 80.

378 Ahn, “European Great Power Politics”, 80.

379 Ahn, “European Great Power Politics”, 80.

380 Ahn, “European Great Power Politics”, 84.

Ahn composes a pamphlet discourse based on *Eighteenth century sources online*, compiling some 155,000 volumes. These are then divided into graphs, by searching a common topic or denominator of each pamphlet, such as Jacobinism, constitution etc. Using this method, Ahn, argues that during the eighteenth century “the centrality of European concerns in British public debate is beyond question” as far as pamphlet literature is concerned.³⁸¹ The Corsican issue may be viewed as an attempt by many British writers, avidly interested in foreign affairs, to turn the focus of the government away from America and back into Europe.

If there was an attempt by British writers to bring the focus of foreign policy back into Europe, why then was this the case? Perhaps the answer lies in the second major issue raised in Essay IX of Boswell’s book. There was a belief during the 1760s that Britain was in decline following the Seven Years War. Many writers revelled in the ‘glory’ gained during that war, and by which Britain became the most dominant power in Europe. The 1760s however, brought about major problems, particularly the debt raised during the war. This caused many problems in the American colonies, when Britain attempted to raise a variety of different taxes in order to pay off war debts. Also, as illustrated by many of the opposition writers studied, the lack of British action regarding Corsica highlighted a major weakness of the government and the nation.

Brendan Simms in his book *Three victories and a Defeat* (2007), argues that British foreign policy suffered a number of reversals in the five years following 1768, when “a number of bastions across Europe”, such as Corsica, Sweden and Poland, “had fallen”.³⁸² All were widely perceived to have “profound implications also for Britain’s naval security”.³⁸³ The fall of Corsica to France was the first step towards the ‘decline of the First British Empire’ according to Simms. The conquest of Corsica by France also “symbolised and hastened Britain’s general European decline”.³⁸⁴ However the greatest damage was “to Britain’s status as a great power”.³⁸⁵ These were the fears allayed by many British writers before and after the conquest of Corsica. Simms writes

381 Ahn, “European Great Power Politics”, 94.

382 Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire 1714-1783*, (London: Penguin books, 2007), 555.

383 Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat*, 555.

384 Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat* 557.

385 Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat* 557.

that the principal courts on the continent were “convinced that Britain was entirely focused on the colonies, as well as domestically unstable”, and therefore “no longer thought her alliance worth having”.³⁸⁶ This would have profound implications during the War of American Independence (1775-1783), when Britain found itself facing a colonial rebellion and a coalition of European powers led by France, without any major European ally of note. Why then did the government not intervene in Corsica?

Against intervention in Corsica: Attacks on Boswell

Not all newspaper reports and pamphlets were endeared to the Corsican cause. When searching for published works regarding Corsica in Britain, I found that the majority generally supported the islanders’ cause. However, there was a considerable vocal minority opposed to intervention in Corsica. I will now look at the main arguments advocating for Britain to remain detached from Corsican affairs. Those who sought to attack the validity of the Corsican cause would inevitably assail its main advocate: James Boswell. One of the more infamous pamphlets criticising Boswell on Corsica was William Kendrick’s *An Epistle to James Boswell* (1768). William Kendrick was one of the more notorious writers during the eighteenth century, often criticising and libelling his fellow writers and their works. The title to the pamphlet however was deceiving. Boswell himself later met Kendrick in April 1772. Boswell commented in his journal that Kendrick “once wrote an 18d pamphlet against me, but principally against Mr Johnson, though it was entitled *A Letter to James Boswell*”.³⁸⁷ Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was an essayist, a lifelong friend of Boswell and one of his great influences. Johnson would become the main subject of Boswell’s famous biography *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791). Kendrick’s pamphlet questioned the morals and sentiments of Dr Johnson; Boswell was attacked merely by association. Why then study Kendrick’s work? The *Epistle* was written in the midst of a flurry of publications on Corsica, and therefore cannot be ignored as a source criticising Boswell and in some regards, the Corsican cause.

³⁸⁶ Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat*, 556.

³⁸⁷ Boswell, *Boswell for the Defence 1769-1774*, ed. William Wimsatt, Jr. and Frederick Pottle, (Kingswood, Surrey: Windmill press LTD, 1960), 95.

The main section of Kendrick's pamphlet focused on criticising Samuel Johnson's essay *Idler 089*, regarding physical evil and moral good. I shall now briefly discuss Kendrick's concluding notes from this section. Kendrick's main criticism concentrated on Boswell's claim made in the *Account of Corsica*, that he would send some of Johnson's works to Paoli at a future date. Kendrick believed it wrong for a 'brave' people to "exchange the substance for the shadow".³⁸⁸ The Corsicans, a people already imbued with the proper principles of liberty, would be inhibited by the 'poison' of Johnson's works. The postscript to the *Epistle* was far more relevant to discussions on the Corsican issue. Kendrick criticised Boswell's attempts to compare Corsica to Britain. He noted that Boswell, in his *Account of Corsica*, had revealed two controversial Corsican practices: the Vendetta and trial by torture. These were two notions "too shocking to the humanity and generosity of Englishmen".³⁸⁹ Such barbarous sentiments, according to Kendrick, "will never prevail in England".³⁹⁰ The Corsicans were still a barbarous backward nation. Kendrick also noted Boswell's "mistaken notions of liberty", focusing on Boswell's claim that the arts and sciences were the "offspring" of liberty.³⁹¹ The arts and sciences had flourished in countries "which liberty was the same time a stranger" such as France or Russia.³⁹²

Boswell's liberty was based upon foreign invasion, reinforced by the examples of Corsica, Holland and Switzerland. Kendrick believed that Boswell had inferred that the preservation of national liberty depended "on a perfect coalition between the lords and commons".³⁹³ Kendrick however, argued that it was the reciprocal jealousy of the several constituent parts of government that formed "the bulwark of the constitution".³⁹⁴ Occasional discord was "the constant guardian of public freedom".³⁹⁵ Here Kendrick referenced the argument of Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) in his *Discourses on Livy* (1517), when Machiavelli described the constitutional model of the Roman Republic. Kendrick constantly referenced other well known writers such as

388 William Kendrick, *An Epistle to James Boswell, ESQ*, (London: Printed for Fletcher and Anderson, 1768), 34.

389 Kendrick, *An Epistle*, 41.

390 Kendrick, *An Epistle*, 42.

391 Kendrick, *An Epistle*, 42.

392 Kendrick, *An Epistle*, 42.

393 Kendrick, *An Epistle*, 48.

394 Kendrick, *An Epistle*, 48.

395 Kendrick, *An Epistle*, 48.

Machiavelli and Rousseau, to reinforce his own opinions and arguments. He questioned Boswell's notions of liberty and the character habits of the Corsicans. Could a barbarous people really be compared to the refined and humanitarian British?

The British Newspapers-arguments against intervention 1768-1769

There were a number of arguments made in the British newspapers against intervention in Corsica. The anonymous writer of an article in the 30 June 1768 edition of the *Gazetteer* argued that "the importance of that island, I think, has been greatly exaggerated".³⁹⁶ This stemmed from the belief that any islands which "can give but little augmentation of wealth, are seldom an augmentation of strength to a nation, that has not a powerful naval force".³⁹⁷ French occupation of the island would "render it more easy to be attacked by a maritime power" such as Britain.³⁹⁸ If France had no strong naval force to hold the island, what about a maritime nation such as Britain? The writer maintained that the loss of Minorca for example, would be "hardly any inconvenience to us".³⁹⁹ Britain would be able to maintain its superiority in the Mediterranean "by our fleets and cruisers, to defend our trade there, and annoy that of our enemies".⁴⁰⁰ The French regardless would be unable to draw many "commercial advantages from the island" of Corsica.⁴⁰¹ French 'vanity' and 'arrogance' would make them detested on the island. During the first breach between France and Britain, the Corsicans "would throw themselves under our protection" and Britain then would have a more "just title to declare ourselves their defenders".⁴⁰² The writer questioned Corsica's commercial and strategic importance for Britain. Britain did not need to intervene on Corsica immediately, but could wait for a moment of French weakness. Corsica was not the only major foreign issue in British political discussion during the years 1768-1769. In 1769, the January 6th edition of the *Gazetteer* commented that some "shallow politicians" had thought it "strange" England had not taken the side of the Corsicans in their "present dilemma".⁴⁰³ The reason however appeared 'obvious':

³⁹⁶ "To the Printer of the *Gazetteer*", *Gazetteer*, 30 June 1768, Issue 12270.

³⁹⁷ *Gazetteer*, 30 June, 1768.

³⁹⁸ *Gazetteer*, 30 June, 1768.

³⁹⁹ *Gazetteer*, 30 June, 1768.

⁴⁰⁰ *Gazetteer*, 30 June, 1768.

⁴⁰¹ *Gazetteer*, 30 June, 1768.

⁴⁰² *Gazetteer*, 30 June, 1768.

⁴⁰³ "London", *Gazetteer*, 6 January 1769, Issue 12433.

“it would seem unnatural to draw the sword in defence of a foreign state, at a time when the rod of correction is holding over the heads of our American brethren”.⁴⁰⁴ The writer of this section clearly placed American issues and affairs above Corsica. They considered the Americans their ‘brethren’, but not the Corsicans. The writings of Boswell and others attempted to portray the similarities between British and Corsican liberties. However, the Corsicans were still considered to be rebels. In fact, many British newspapers still referred to them as ‘malcontents’, even those writing in support of the Corsican cause. As I have already mentioned, Kendrick in his *Epistle* argued that the Corsicans were ‘barbaric’ compared to the civilised Britons.

The other major argument put forward in the 6 January edition of the *Gazetteer*, was that American issues were more important for Britain than Corsica. The 1769, 17 January edition of the *Public Advertiser* contained the extract of a letter from Paris to a gentleman in London, dated 23 December 1768. The French writer argued that it was easy “for men to see the faults of others, while blind to their own”!⁴⁰⁵ The Corsicans were not as remote from the French as the Americans were to England. Britain had been ‘abusing’ France for reducing the Corsicans. However, Britain was “about to make slaves of a much greater number of those British Americans”.⁴⁰⁶ The French writer argued that Britain had “no true idea of liberty, or real desire to see it flourish and increase”.⁴⁰⁷ This sentiment attacked the very core of British ideals of liberty. The only liberty Britain seemed to value was “the liberty of abusing your superiors and of tyrannizing over those below you”.⁴⁰⁸ The newspaper was attempting to make readers aware of the apparent hypocrisy of Britain concerning Corsica. Ultimately, Britain was a commercial Empire whose record of liberty toward subject nations was questionable. The article also attacked the heart of Boswell’s and other pro-Corsican writer’s ideals concerning British liberty, and its extension across the world. The newspaper was using the well known Corsican issue to make people aware of and foment opposition against Britain’s actions in America. America ultimately took precedence over Corsica.

404 *Gazetteer*, 6 January 1769.

405 “London”, *Public Advertiser*, 17 January, 1769, Issue 10677.

406 *Public Advertiser*, 17 January, 1769.

407 *Public Advertiser*, 17 January, 1769.

408 *Public Advertiser*, January 17, 1769.

Anti-intervention argument: a defence of the government

Debates over the Corsican issue divided the nation into two camps. The opposition fervently argued for intervention in Corsica, especially when it became apparent that the government would not assist the island. It was only natural for an alternative bloc to appear. A certain number of writers published works in the British newspapers supporting the government's actions concerning Corsica. Whether these writers were paid by the government is difficult to say. The anonymity of most of the writers makes it difficult to ascertain their background and motives behind writing on the Corsican issue. In 1769, an article was published in the 23 March edition of the *Public Advertiser*; written by someone who called themselves Seneca, after the first century Roman philosopher. Seneca argued that during 1768, "times were full of trouble"; revolt "threatened in our colonies, division in the court".⁴⁰⁹ The nation was full of 'sedition' and 'faction'. The factious and ungrateful colonies had "thrown off their allegiance to a mother".⁴¹⁰ However, the resolution and wisdom of his Grace the Duke of Grafton "quelled the tumults in America".⁴¹¹ Despite the many problems of the nation, the Duke had guided Britain through tough storms.

Seneca also admired the perceived contempt with which the Duke of Grafton had treated the clamours of "a few incendiaries about the island of Corsica".⁴¹² The writer viewed the Corsican issue as an attempt by the opposition to cause sedition in an already troubled state. The contempt Grafton had for Corsica was "proof of good sense as well as an attention to the real interest of the nation".⁴¹³ The 'real interest' of the nation was dealing with sedition and faction within Britain and America. Intervention in Corsica was altogether impossible because the nation was "exhausted by the enormous expenses of a former war, Great Britain is in no condition to enter upon frivolous pretexts into another".⁴¹⁴ The Corsican cause was treated as a 'frivolous' issue with no meaning or substance for Britain. More importantly, the expenses and

409 "For the Public Advertiser. To his Grace the Duke of Grafton", *Public Advertiser*, 23 March 1769, Issue 10733.

410 *Public Advertiser*, 23 March, 1769.

411 *Public Advertiser*, 23 March, 1769.

412 *Public Advertiser*, 23 March, 1769.

413 *Public Advertiser*, 23 March, 1769.

414 *Public Advertiser*, 23 March, 1769.

debt incurred from the Seven Years War left Britain in a vulnerable state. It was one of the main reasons why Britain attempted to change the tax laws in America.

The 24 May edition of the *Public Advertiser* also bemoaned the “deluded rabble” and “depravity of ambitious men”.⁴¹⁵ The writer, who called themselves Humanus, believed Grafton had “acted in such a manner as will in the end rescue your countrymen” from dreadful accusations of enemies and sedition.⁴¹⁶ This article was written in a similar manner to the previously mentioned writings by Seneca, and could possibly have been written by the same person. Humanus hoped Corsica would continue to be supported by Britain “in that manner which wastes the forces of our enemies, without embroiling us in war”.⁴¹⁷ Humanus did not want Britain to foolishly be dragged into a European wide war, a sentiment widely held in certain quarters in Britain during the later 1760s. Britain had no major ally of note, and could not afford a major war with France. There was a feeling among some in the opposition that France was to be appeased with the conquest of Corsica, following its disastrous losses during the Seven Years War. To what degree these claims are true can only be answered within the last section of this chapter, by studying the Duke of Grafton’s own writings.

Autobiography and political correspondence of Augustus Henry, 3rd Duke of Grafton

The only way to ascertain the thoughts and actions of the government regarding the Corsican issue is by studying the writings of the then Prime Minister, the Duke of Grafton. The Duke of Grafton, known as Augustus Henry FitzRoy (1735-1811), wrote his *Autobiography and Political Correspondence* many years after the events in 1804. This will be the principal source for this section, combined with the letters of the Southern secretary, the Earl of Shelburne, and those of the French ambassador, the Earl of Rochford. Grafton wrote that he had arranged all important papers on public transactions, to create “a kind of memoir of my life”.⁴¹⁸ Grafton inserted whole letters as well as other authentic documents into the work, which he hoped would make the

415 “For the Public Advertiser”, To his Grace the Duke of Grafton”, *Public Advertiser*, 24 May, 1769, Issue 10782.

416 *Public Advertiser*, 24 May, 1769.

417 *Public Advertiser*, 24 May, 1769.

418 Augustus Henry FitzRoy, *Autobiography and Political Correspondence of Augustus Henry, Third Duke of Grafton*, ed. William Anson, (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1898), 1.

Autobiography acceptable “to the accurate and curious historians”.⁴¹⁹ Grafton’s *Autobiography* could be construed as an apology and justification for the actions and decisions he made as Prime Minister. However there is no reason to dismiss this source merely as an apology. In fact the importance and authenticity of the materials used make it a valuable source indeed. Grafton had on hand many letters and documents unlikely to have otherwise survived today. The *Autobiography* more importantly captured Grafton’s own ideas and opinions during the events he wrote about.

Grafton dedicated three chapters of his *Autobiography* to his years as Prime Minister. In those chapters, he only devoted seven pages to the Corsican crisis. The rest covered the revolt in the American colonies and the major problems within the British cabinet. The lack of coverage summed up Grafton’s attitude of the Corsican affair: it was a side note to the real issues of state. When referring to the French invasion of Corsica, Grafton wrote that any accession of territories to a rival kingdom “could not be palatable to our government, nor to the nation”.⁴²⁰ Here Grafton expressed the general sentiment of the British nation regarding France. However, he could never believe “that the possession of Corsica would add to the crown of France, the degree of advantage, which many were industriously giving out”.⁴²¹ Grafton, similar to other writers against intervention, questioned the commercial and strategic importance of Corsica.

It is interesting to consider the extent to which Corsica actually improved the wealth of France. Corsica certainly did not become the commercial centre it had been modelled out to be. However, Grafton had misunderstood the popular perception of the island. He recognised its importance to the nation, but failed to realise that any failure to act on the island was perceived in many quarters as a sign of the governments weakness. A strong, active foreign policy was a prerequisite for any successful British government during the eighteenth century. Grafton commented that the Duc de Choiseul may have been wicked enough “to plunge his country into the horrors of war” through his ‘restless ambition’.⁴²² However, “our consciences would never have allowed as to

419 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 2.

420 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 203.

421 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 203.

422 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 203.

advise, on this occasion, a recommencement of hostilities”.⁴²³ There was a real reluctance, particularly from the government of the time, for another war with France to break out so soon after the last. This was down to two reasons. The first was an understanding that Britain’s finances were still fragile after the Seven Years War, and the risk of any war over Corsica was too great. The second was the sense of appeasement regarding France. Grafton himself commented that the Duc of Choiseul and the French nobility were “impatient to retrieve the honour and credit of their arms, which had been so frequently tarnished in the late war, both by land and sea”.⁴²⁴ Whether Grafton himself believed in appeasement with France remains difficult to determine. What was clear was that any reluctance by the ministry to intervene in Corsica meant opposition writers could accuse the government of appeasing France. This was unacceptable for patriotic Englishmen.

The main action of the government regarding Corsica was, according to Grafton, to object to the French invasion short of declaring war. Lord Rochford was the ambassador at Paris in 1768. In a letter sent on the 13 May 1768, Shelburne informed Rochford of the need to determine the “differing reports” regarding Corsica.⁴²⁵ Shelburne believed that it was ‘obvious’ what French intentions were: the annexation of Corsica.⁴²⁶ The transference of Corsica from Genoa to France was by a secret treaty, and British cabinet ministers had only begun to suspect French intentions in May 1768. Shelburne informed Rochford that he would soon be able to inform him of the views of the other ministers regarding Corsica, “as soon as they can meet for that purpose, which has hitherto been only prevented by a necessary attention to Home affairs at the opening of parliament”.⁴²⁷ Clearly, Corsicans affairs were considered less important than that of Wilkes’ agitations and the American colonies. Shelburne himself was one of the only cabinet ministers who promoted an active, aggressive policy regarding Corsica. He was a student of the Earl of Chatham and of his aggressive foreign policy during the Seven Years War. Shelburne, like Chatham, was fearful of the Bourbon powers, and their potential revival in strength following the Seven Years War.

⁴²³FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 203.

⁴²⁴FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 168.

⁴²⁵ SP 78/275, Shelburne to Rochford, Secret, 13 May 1768.

⁴²⁶ SP 78/275, Shelburne to Rochford, Secret, 13 May 1768.

⁴²⁷ SP 78/275, Shelburne to Rochford, Secret, 13 May 1768.

Rochford was instructed to put the Duc de Choiseul “off from the plan he had formed”.⁴²⁸

Rochford had reported to Grafton that during the month of May before the invasion, the Duc de Choiseul’s language had ‘softened’, and at one time was “confident that he should have succeeded”.⁴²⁹ A week later however, the Duc of Choiseul had taken up the former tone for invasion. Lord Rochford, in a private letter to Grafton, believed this change in tone was down to the imprudent declaration made by the Lord Mansfield, a ‘great law lord’ then in Paris. At one of the French Minister’s tables, Mansfield stated that “the English ministry were too weak, and the nation too wise to support them in entering on a war for the sake of Corsica”.⁴³⁰ Many opposition writers argued that the British government should have acted more strongly in pressuring the French not to invade Corsica. Grafton placed this down to the imprudent declaration by the Lord Mansfield. Mansfield however reflected the general attitude of the British government regarding Corsica. Whether the Duc of Choiseul had changed his mind regarding the invasion of Corsica remained unlikely. However, Mansfield’s declaration allayed many doubts that Britain would not intervene in support of the Corsicans.

Rochford’s correspondence with Shelburne offered another reason why the French knew that Britain would not risk going to war over Corsica. In a letter to Shelburne dated 2 June 1768, Rochford explained that the Duc of Choiseul was “very much surprised that we imagined they wanted here to go to war”.⁴³¹ Choiseul was very reluctant to go to war with Britain, and claimed to Rochford to be “personally invested for the continuance of peace”.⁴³² Even as late as the 30 June 1768, Rochford described to Shelburne that the Duc of Choiseul was “greatly agitated” over the potential of a war with Britain. Rochford stated to Shelburne that there was nothing the French court dreaded “so much as this moment as a war, and that there is scarce anything they could do to avoid it”.⁴³³ Clearly, Choiseul and the King Louis XV (1710-1774) were “mortified beyond measure” to find that Britain “had a mind to make Corsica a pretext

428 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 204.

429 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 204.

430 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 204.

431 SP 78/275, Rochford to Shelburne, 2 June 1768.

432 SP 78/275, Rochford to Shelburne, 2 June 1768.

433 SP 78/275, Rochford to Shelburne, 30 June 1768.

for beginning a war”.⁴³⁴ Rochford however informed Shelburne that the French would not now retract their forces from Corsica. Rochford was confident that if Britain “insist it (threat) with firmness”, the French might back down.⁴³⁵ Rochford noted in another letter sent to Shelburne – dated the 14 July – that since the French ambassador to England, Count Chatelet, had arrived in Paris the week before, “the minds of the people here are a little quieted”; the expedition to Corsica would be continued.⁴³⁶ In a later letter to Shelburne, dated 21 July 1768, Rochford noted that “the storm which seemed to threaten him (Choiseul) is blown over”.⁴³⁷ He wrote that Choiseul appeared visibly more satisfied, and remarked that it was “astonishing since count Chatelet’s arrival here, how the language of everybody has changed”; it had become public knowledge that Britain “shall not engage in a war on account of their expedition to Corsica”.⁴³⁸ Clearly, the Count Chatelet had gained assurances from the ministers in London, that Britain would not fight a war with France over Corsica. This was the main reason why Choiseul’s demeanour had changed.

Britain’s ministry was rife with division. Technically, Chatham was still the Prime Minister until November 1768 when he resigned, but his illness in 1768 meant that Grafton was de facto Prime Minister. Shelburne, and to a lesser extent Grafton wished to support the Corsicans. But they were opposed by the ‘Bedford’ party, headed by the Lord Weymouth, who were against “taking any steps which may disturb the general tranquillity and peace”.⁴³⁹ Affairs in America also aggravated the situation, with many in the ministry keen to avoid a war with France whilst there were problems in the colonies. It was clear that Chatelet had private assurances from Lord Weymouth and other members of the cabinet, that Britain would not go to war with France over Corsica. The Lord Mansfield’s ‘imprudent declaration’, as described by Grafton, provided further support to the fact that Britain would not intervene in Corsica. Choiseul was aware of the divisions within the British cabinet. Therefore any subsequent threats by Shelburne or Rochford were meaningless. Shelburne himself

434 SP 78/275, Rochford to Shelburne, 30 June 1768.

435 SP 78/275, Rochford to Shelburne, 30 June 1768.

436 SP 78/275, Rochford to Shelburne, 14 July 1768.

437 SP 78/275, Rochford to Shelburne, Secret, 21 July 1768.

438 SP 78/275, Rochford to Shelburne, Secret, 21 July 1768.

439 Edmond Fitzmaurice, *Life of William, Earl of Shelburne*, 2nd ed. Vol. 1, (London: Macmillan and CO, 1912), 365.

was disliked by many members of the ministry, including Grafton. Shelburne would resign in October 1768, thereby ending any attempts from within the government to aid the Corsicans. If the British cabinet had showed a more united front in regard to Corsica, perhaps they could have prevented the French invasion through determined diplomacy.

The British government originally sent the agent John Stewart to Corsica, in order to ascertain the intentions of the French and the capacity of the Corsicans for resistance. Stewart left England in May 1768, but did not reach Corsica until August that year, making many stops. Grafton recommended an old acquaintance, Captain Dunant – a Genevan – to travel to Corsica via a quicker route. Grafton's letter to Dunant stated that the British government wished to be informed of the general disposition of General Paoli with regard to the French invasion.⁴⁴⁰ Paoli, in his letter of response to the British government, dated 24 July 1768, called himself the “dèfendre et coserver la libertè de sa patrie”.⁴⁴¹ Nothing in Paoli's conference with Captain Dunant “marked the smallest indication of dejection”.⁴⁴² Paoli was confident of the “general support of his nation”⁴⁴³, but what he lacked was arms, artillery and supplies. With a succour of arms furnished to him, “he should be able to defend himself for a considerable time”.⁴⁴⁴ The problem for the British government was the aforementioned proclamation of 1763, banning any British aid or contact with the Corsican rebels. However, a change in circumstances had altered the conditions which the proclamation was made, namely that the Genoese had surrendered their rights of the island to France. The proclamation was aimed at defending Genoese interests, not French. Therefore the order of council was no longer regarded as a force. Grafton commented that a moment was not lost “in supplying most of the articles requested by the Corsicans”.⁴⁴⁵ Grafton and the government enjoyed the expectation of “seeing France baffled in her scheme”; they were however vexed to find “General Paoli himself obliged to give way” in May 1769.⁴⁴⁶ Grafton believed this was “through the backwardness of his followers, and

440 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 205, to see Grafton's letter to Dunant in full.

441 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 206.

442 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 208.

443 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 208.

444 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 208.

445 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 208.

446 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 209.

perhaps also the treachery of some, in whom he had too much confided”.⁴⁴⁷ Treachery certainly played a part in the Corsican defeat at Pontenuovo on 9 May 1769. Many subsequent British newspapers reported that certain sections of Corsican troops had absconded on the battlefield.

What Grafton’s *Autobiography* highlighted were the major divisions that dogged Britain’s ministry. The ministry Grafton inherited from the Earl of Chatham after his resignation in November 1768 was a coalition. Within the footnotes, the editor of Grafton’s *Autobiography* Sir William Anson commented in 1898 that the Earl of Shelburne had wanted a bold policy regarding Corsica while the Duke of Bedford’s party had wanted peace at any price. Grafton himself wanted a ‘half and half’ “but wholly indefensible line of action”.⁴⁴⁸ According to Anson, Grafton’s attempts to supply the Corsican rebels with arms showed “at once his wishes and his powerlessness”.⁴⁴⁹ Grafton was walking a tight rope with his ministers, as he attempted to appease both sides. In the end, he had showed his own weaknesses as Prime Minister, and felt sense of failure regarding his role over the Corsican issue. Ultimately, the Corsicans were outnumbered and out-gunned, and faced a professional French army; no amount of supplies sent would change that fact. Only the support of the British navy and perhaps a British expeditionary force may have saved the Corsican rebels. For Grafton, war was always out of the question, and therefore his rather limited attempts to supply the Corsicans showed weakness, not strength. Corsica was debated during the November 1768 parliament. The motion for correspondence with France relating to Corsica “produced a long discussion upon the affairs of Corsica” in parliament.⁴⁵⁰ However, the motion was defeated by a large margin (230 votes to 84), thereby ending any lingering hopes that any British aid might be sent to Corsica.⁴⁵¹

447 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 209.

448 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 209.

449 FitzRoy, *Autobiography, Duke of Grafton*, 209.

450 Cobbett’s *Parliamentary History of England*, vol. XVI, 1765-1771, ed. William Cobbett, (London: Printed by C. Hamsard, 1813), 475.

451 Cobbett’s *Parliamentary History*, vol. XVI, 475.

Concluding notes

There was a clear separation in the years 1768-1769 between the governments policies and the popular will. Generally the Corsican cause was widely supported in Britain and embraced by the majority of the British literate classes. The idea that Britain and Corsica were fellow brothers of liberty was the strongest motivating factor behind many Britons writing on, and even providing subscriptions of money and arms in support of the Corsican cause. The idealism behind Britain's foreign policy changed during the 1760s. At the start of the eighteenth century, there was a strongly held belief that Britain was the protector of Protestantism in Europe. This ideal was enforced by the Glorious Revolution in 1688, and the subsequent conflicts against the Catholic Sun King Louis XIV. But there was a change in ideology during the Seven Years War as Protestantism became a less important factor within European politics. The idea of liberty, and the desire to spread Britain's form of government across the world, replaced Protestant idealism. The case study of Corsica highlighted this change. Corsica, despite being a Catholic country, was believed to be more similar to Britain than any other nation in Europe at the time. This was due to Corsica's liberty and form of government.

The idealism of liberty would also be seen during the next decade with the American Revolutionary war. Many British writers would support the American cause as fellow brothers of liberty, fighting against their own arbitrary government. The other primary motivator was the commercial and strategic importance of Corsica. Britain was first and foremost a commercial empire. Despite the general support of liberty by writers such as Boswell, the commercial and strategic importance of Corsica was never far from their minds and consistently mentioned in their writings. What was clear was that this liberal idealism was a veil for the expansion of the British Empire. Empires have always needed an idea to drive and justify their expansionism, and Protestantism was simply replaced by a support for liberty. However, to simply suggest that those supporting the Corsican cause were really rampant imperialists betrays the very ideology that formed them. There was general support for the Corsican cause among many Britons. Corsica's fight against the tyrannical French only further cemented British beliefs in the brave Corsican heroes. The mass subscriptions gathered suggested

that support for the Corsican cause was genuine. The idealism of liberty cannot be underestimated in shaping the thoughts and ideas of Britons who supported the Corsican cause.

Despite the mass popular support for the Corsican cause, the government did very little to support the islanders. Popular pressure could do little to sway the desire within the cabinet to avoid war with France. Britain was in debt and vulnerable following the Seven Years War. It was impractical and impolitic to intervene in favour of the Corsican rebels; the risks were far too great. Domestic sedition and problems in the American colonies took up the majority of the government's time. The 1760s also marked a change within British foreign policy. The first half of the eighteenth century had seen Britain adopt a Eurocentric policy, epitomized by the dual monarchy with Hanover. However, after the Seven Years War, Britain's attention was fixed upon America, due to the problems there and fear of losing the valuable colonies. This led to the perception that Britain was no longer a European power. The failure to intervene in Corsica highlighted this change in policy. However, British interest in Europe did not diminish during these years, as illustrated by the works of both Brendan Simms and Doohwan Ahn. To what degree did the Corsican issue contribute to the fall of Grafton's ministry in 1770? The main problem presented by Corsica was the perception of failure. The opposition soon immersed themselves in supporting the Corsican cause. Corsica became one of the major topics used to attack the government. The Grafton ministry was certainly unpopular during these years; its failure to support the Corsicans only exacerbated this unpopularity.

The Corsican crisis was one of many issues faced by the Grafton ministry. The problems with the American colonies, the debt and the major domestic sedition, in part caused by John Wilkes, combined to bring down the Grafton ministry. The issues themselves however did not cause the Grafton's fall, but rather the administration's failure to deal with them. To what degree was the failure to intervene in Corsica the first step toward the fall of the First British Empire? Perhaps the most important result to come from the French conquest of Corsica, was the major damage caused to Britain's prestige within Europe. Eighteenth century major power politics was a

dangerous game, and any perceived weakness within the state system could result in the loss of a nation's major power status. In this particular case, Britain was no longer seen to be a major power in European politics, which resulted in her isolation from any major alliance system. Britain's vulnerability was most dramatically highlighted during the American Revolutionary War, when she was confronted with an American rebellion as well as a coalition of European powers led by France. The conquest of Corsica was certainly one of the first steps taken by France to recover from her losses incurred by Britain after the Seven Years War. French intervention in the American Revolutionary War was the next logical step to regain her own great power status. Perhaps the greatest weakness of the Grafton ministry was the lack of foresight to realize the way the wind was blowing: the end of British rule in America.

Paoli in Britain 1769-1789

On 14 September 1769, Pasquale Paoli (1725-1807) was a Corsican exile in The Hague, Holland, getting ready to board a ship to his main destination: England. Paoli was formerly leader of the self-proclaimed Corsican Republic (1755-1768). The Corsicans had declared independence against their corrupt and tyrannical Genoese overlords in 1728. The Corsicans elected Paoli to be their leader or ‘General’ in 1755. After years of hostilities, the Corsicans under Paoli reduced Genoese possessions to a few fortified coastal towns. In May 1768, in the face of inevitable defeat, Genoa ceded their rights of the island to the powerful kingdom of France. The French subsequently sent an invasion force to capture the island from Paoli’s Corsicans. After a year of hostilities, Paoli’s defeat at Pontenuovo on 9 May 1769 finally ended Corsican hopes of independence. The French conquest of the island was complete by June 1769 with the fall of Corte, Corsica’s capital. Paoli himself evaded capture on board a British ship, and fled to Italy. Paoli however had not given up hope for retaking Corsica back from the French. Only one nation in Europe had the capacity to aid him for this venture: Britain. Paoli’s progress across Europe to Britain received the attention of many prominent persons. He had made an acquaintance of Joseph II of Austria (1741-1790) in Mantua, and met the Stadtholder William V (1748-1806) in Holland. Paoli had only one final destination in mind, however. On 14 September 1769, Paoli wrote a letter from the Hague, to his dear friend and fellow Corsican patriot Count Rivarola. Count Antonio Rivarola was son of the famous Corsican patriot Domenico Rivarola, and served as the Sardinian consul at Leghorn. Paoli informed Rivarola that “tomorrow I leave for England. My journey has been long, but I hope with reason, that my apparent desire to go travelling...will affect anything”.⁴⁵²

Why did Paoli chose England as his destination for exile? Paoli believed that England represented his greatest hope for the restoration of the Corsican Republic. Paoli and the Corsican rebellion first gained popularity in England with the publication of James Boswell’s *Account of Corsica*, in February 1768. Boswell’s book created widespread interest in this previously unknown island. The previous chapter studied in detail the

⁴⁵² Pasquale Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, ed. Niccolo Tommaseo, (Florence: Gio Pietro Vieusseux, 1846), 181.

‘Corsican crisis’ that occurred following the French invasion of the island in May 1768. The French invasion made Corsica and its leader Paoli the main subject of news in Britain in 1768-1769. Boswell subsequently published his *British essays* in early 1769. Written by a wide variety of anonymous British writers, the *British essays* contained a more prevalent anti-French bias than Boswell’s previous *Account of Corsica*. Boswell’s work was reflecting the current mood of the British public following the French invasion of the island in May 1768. France was Britain’s main rival during the eighteenth century; therefore, the Corsican issue enjoyed a great deal of publicity. The Corsican cause gained widespread support from the literate classes, particularly from the opposition in parliament, which was at this time was headed by the ‘Society For The Supporters Of The Bill Of Rights’ (hereafter usually referred to simply as ‘the society’). This group was formed in February 1769 after the expulsion of the radical journalist and politician John Wilkes from parliament. Members and associates of the Society were prominent advocates of the Corsican cause in Britain. Such examples included: Catherine Macaulay; and Samuel Vaughan, a major plantation owner in the West Indies and one of the leaders of the Society. Vaughan helped to organize subscriptions of money and arms gathered to aid the Corsicans during the years 1768-1769. The British government however refused to intervene in favour of the Corsicans. This resulted in the fall of Paoli and his eventual exile to Britain. Paoli stated to Rivarola in his letter dated 14 September 1769, that the “irons are heated” in England: opposition to French rule of Corsica was widespread.⁴⁵³ The mass support of the British public could prompt the government to intervene in favour of the Corsicans.

On 18 September 1769, Paoli arrived at Harwich, England. Two days later, Paoli arrived in London to a hero’s reception. The 25- 27 September edition of *Lloyd’s Evening Post* noted that the public was ‘impatient’ to see the ‘celebrated’ Paoli. Their desire to see him was so great, that the house where he resided was “continually crowded by great numbers of people”.⁴⁵⁴ Paoli believed that the popularity of the Corsican cause would prompt the British ministry to help expel the French from Corsica. This chapter will study the full extent of the reaction to Paoli’s arrival and

⁴⁵³ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 181.

⁴⁵⁴ ‘Postscript: London’, *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, 25-27 September, 1769, Issue 1908.

exile in Britain, as he epitomised the Corsican cause, focusing on both the government's and the opposition's (including the Society For The Supporters Of The Bill Of Rights) positions concerning Paoli. I will show that the period from late 1769-1772 was crucial to the future of the Corsican cause in Britain. There was a marked change in support; roles were reversed and the government became the primary benefactors of Paoli, whilst the opposition gave him the cold shoulder. Paoli's objectives and aims for Corsica, would subsequently change and alter during his twenty years of exile in Britain. Popular support for the Corsicans dwindled over time, causing Paoli to become more and more reliant upon governmental financial support.

The main aim of the chapter is to chart the support for the Corsican cause in Britain from 1769-1789. The chapter is divided into two major sections. The first section studies the reaction to Paoli's arrival in Britain from 1769-1772. The second section studies the Corsican cause in Britain from 1772-1789, when support for Paoli became far more muted. The Corsican crisis became a more distant affair, and America became the main focus of foreign policy. This section will also study the impact of the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) upon the Corsican cause in Britain. With the outbreak of war between Britain and France in 1778, why was there no attempt to invade Corsica, then a French possession? More crucially, did the Corsican exiles headed by Paoli have any real chance of gaining British governmental support? Ironically, the greatest chance for Paoli's restoration to Corsica, came not from Britain, but France, with the commencement of the French Revolution in 1789. The latter events provide the epilogue to this chapter.

Post 'Corsican Crisis': Boswell and popularising the Corsican cause in Britain

The French conquest of Corsica in June 1769 did not mean the end of the Corsican cause in Britain. On the contrary, British writers loved to support the defeated Corsican cause. In 1771, 'A Lady' wrote *The Conquest of Corsica, by the French. A Tragedy*. The play was set during the French invasion of Corsica from 1768 to 1769. In the first scene, the senators gathered at Corte, the capital of Corsica, in preparation for the coming war. The senators placed their country's welfare in the hands of Paoli, whose

“conduct still is so upright and clear, and all his actions are so nobly great”.⁴⁵⁵ Paoli epitomized the Corsican character for British audiences, and was seen to be the example for others to follow. Every Corsican citizen was “bound for to defend his liberty and country”.⁴⁵⁶ Any Corsican ‘abhors’ the idea of submission, and rids it from their ‘soul’. The tragedy was a typical British portrayal of the Corsican struggle, where the heroic Corsican militia was eventually overwhelmed by the ‘common robber’ France. The Corsicans, especially Paoli, were held as people of intrigue and interest by many Britons; they represented an ancient Roman past long lost.

The most public showcasing of the defeated Corsican cause was Boswell’s jaunt as a Corsican soldier, at the Shakespeare Jubilee in Stratford-upon-Avon, September 1769. The event received much coverage in British newspapers and magazines. Boswell himself wrote an account of the affair in the September 1769 edition of the *London Magazine*. At the ball, “one of the most remarkable masks upon this occasion was James Boswell; in the dress of an armed Corsican chief”.⁴⁵⁷ Boswell wore “a short dark-coloured coat of coarse cloth...his cap or bonnet was of black cloth; on the front of it was embroidered in gold letters, *viva la libertà*”.⁴⁵⁸ He received the Corsican uniform from Paoli, after his visit to Corsica in 1765. Boswell was clearly attempting to build up his own popularity, and perhaps even to boost further sales of his *Account of Corsica*. At the same time, Boswell remained dedicated to the Corsican cause, and that of liberty itself. Boswell was genuinely infatuated by Paoli and the Corsican fight for liberty. During the Corsican crisis, Boswell had gone as far as to organise a shipment of arms to be sent to Corsica.⁴⁵⁹ The speech Boswell gave in the character of a Corsican chief highlighted his continuing faith in the Corsican rebellion:

“But let me plead for liberty distrest [sic],
And warm for her each sympathetic breast:

455 *The Conquest of Corsica, By the French, A Tragedy. By a Lady*, (London: Printed for the Author, 1771), 4.

456 *The Conquest of Corsica*, 12.

457 James Boswell, ‘An Account of the armed Corsican Chief at the Masquerade, at Shakespeare Jubilee, at Stratford-upon-Avon’, *London Magazine, or Gentleman’s Monthly Intelligencer*, September 1769, 455.

458 Boswell, *London Magazine*, September 1769, 455.

459 Charles Gascoigne to James Boswell, 24 January 1769, in *The General Correspondence of James Boswell, 1766-1769*, vol. 2 1768-1769, 137. The invoice of iron ordinance shipped by the Carron company amounted to 30 guns, 2917 round shot and 5020 grape shot.

Amidst the splendid honours which you bear,
To save a sister island! Be your care:
With generous ardour make us also free;
And give to Corsica, a noble jubilee!”⁴⁶⁰

Boswell described Corsica as a ‘sister island’ to Britain, emphasising the similar forms of liberty and government of the two islands: there was a bond of kinship between Britain and Corsica. Boswell wanted Britain to intervene and set Corsica free from French tyranny and occupation. Only then could Corsica have a ‘noble jubilee’ and celebrate a reign of freedom and liberty similar to Britain. Boswell’s speech and Corsican dress certainly had the desired effect: he commented that “as he came into the room he drew universal attention”.⁴⁶¹ He had made Corsica a major topic in the public domain. Boswell wanted to popularise the Corsican cause in part because he knew that Paoli himself would soon be arriving in Britain. *The conquest of Corsica* (1771) concluded the tragedy on a positive note. Paoli, in his ‘doomed’ exile chose to come to an island where still “liberty is sacred held, the people yet are free- England, Happy England”.⁴⁶²

British foreign policy 1763-1775

Before his arrival in Britain, Paoli believed he could exploit public opinion in favour of the Corsican cause. This was most evident in Paoli’s letter to Count Rivarola, dated 14 September 1769. Paoli commented that London’s newspapers were writing of the welcome he had received at Europe’s various courts. They remarked that Paoli should stay in the Hague, in order to “avoid the crowds” in England.⁴⁶³ Paoli wanted to utilize the mass popularity for the Corsican cause in England to his favour. Paoli’s perception of England changed after his arrival in London on 20 September 1769. In another letter sent to Count Rivarola, dated 23 September 1769, Paoli noted that the English “are divided beyond belief, and the spirit of faction has taken among the people against the ministry”.⁴⁶⁴ The England Paoli had entered was suffering from a major domestic crisis. The roots of the crisis could be dated from the Seven Years War (1756-1763).

460 Boswell, *London Magazine*, September 1769, 456.

461 Boswell, *London Magazine*, September 1769, 455.

462 *The Conquest of Corsica*, 42.

463 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 182.

464 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 182.

The greatest problem faced by Paoli was the general reluctance of the ministry to engage in another major European war: during the Seven Years War Britain had amassed a massive debt to achieve the conquest of Canada and to fund other military activities. This reluctance was the primary reason why the British government did little to aid the Corsicans during the French invasion of Corsica in 1768-1769. A disinclination to engage against France or Spain was also highlighted during the Falklands Crisis in 1770. Negotiation rather than war summed up successive ministries' foreign policy from 1763-1775.

Throughout the 1770s, the North ministry adopted a similar foreign policy to that of Grafton during the Corsican crisis. Perhaps the best illustration of this policy was published in the 21-24 May 1774 edition of the *Middlesex Journal*. The *Middlesex Journal* contained an excerpt from the parliamentary debates and sessions in the House of Commons. Newspapers were forbidden to report upon House of Commons debates as they happened. However, they were able to report on the debates after the actual events; some newspapers contained entire speeches from the House of Commons discussions. The *Middlesex Journal* contained the debates following Lord North's speech which opened the budget earlier in the year. North claimed that the opposition constantly berated the ministry, claiming that the government "should have gone to war for Falkland's Islands; you should have gone to war for Corsica; you should have gone to war for the good of Poland".⁴⁶⁵ The failure to act over Corsica was only one of many examples used to criticize the ministry. Corsica was the first in a string of considered failures in British foreign policy following the Seven Years War. Poland was subjected to the First Partition in 1774, in which much of her territory was taken by Russia, Prussia and Austria. Poland was left in a weakened and vulnerable state following the partition, forever subject to their more powerful neighbours. The partition destroyed the perceived 'balance of power' in Eastern Europe. There was a fear within Britain over the increased capacity of the partitioning powers, particularly Russia. Britain's lack of action concerning the affair was seen to be a sign of weakness; a lack of clout in the diplomatic playing field of great power politics.

⁴⁶⁵ 'House of Commons', *Middlesex Journal*, 21-24 May 1774; Issue 804.

The idea that Britain's great power status was under threat was consistently raised during the 1760s and 1770s. Britain's inactivity for many commentators only compounded Britain's weakness. North bemoaned the fact that many had criticised the ministry for their failure to go to war over a variety of issues, such as Corsica and the Falkland's Islands. He maintained however, that any war for these places would have a probable expense of some sixty/seventy millions more of debt "in order to gain a barren rock, not worth sixpence".⁴⁶⁶ This attitude was the main reason why the government would not take action concerning Corsica. Despite its potential for wealth, the island was deemed merely to be a 'barren rock', not worth the heavy expense of war. North's speech contained a general reversion against war itself. North believed war to be the "very reverse of every principle of oeconomy".⁴⁶⁷ One year's war would exhaust all the savings of ten years peace. Britain's commercial system was best preserved in peace time. This attitude of the ministry meant it was extremely improbable Paoli would find the British government willing to fund an expedition to recover Corsica.

North's attitude concerning foreign policy was not the only argument raised during this period. The following *Middlesex Journal* issue, dated 24-26 May 1774, contained Edmund Burke's reply to Lord North's speech. Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was a political theorist, writer, and Member of Parliament. He was a member of the opposition to North's government, and later supported the American revolutionaries. Burke was also a known associate of Paoli through his connections with Boswell. According to Burke, North had essentially told parliament that national honour does not consist in being "the bust meddlers in every European quarrel".⁴⁶⁸ This sentiment reflected the idea that Britain had moved away from a Eurocentric foreign policy. Burke believed that North had "severely condemned the whole system of British politics from the Revolution" in 1688.⁴⁶⁹ There was a genuine fear, particularly from the opposition, that the ministry had turned away from the principles set by the Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689. The Supporters of The Bill of Rights for example, were named after the 'Bill of Rights' legislation, passed in 1689. Burke argued that

⁴⁶⁶ *Middlesex Journal*, 21- 24 May 1774.

⁴⁶⁷ *Middlesex Journal*, 21-24 May 1774.

⁴⁶⁸ 'House of Commons', *Middlesex Journal*, 24-26 May 1774; Issue 805.

⁴⁶⁹ *Middlesex Journal*, 24-26 May 1774.

North had his ‘system’ of foreign policy, although he was not the author of it. It was a system of blindness and infatuation “held forth as an excuse for that conduct which saw Corsica seized in one part of Europe, and Poland dismembered in another, with the most torpid indifference”.⁴⁷⁰ Burke criticised the entire conduct of British foreign policy following the Seven Years War. By having that little busy spirit of inter-meddling, both Corsica and Poland “might have been prevented (from falling) by mere force of negotiation”.⁴⁷¹ The abandonment of the foreign policy practised up until the Seven Years War was the primary reason why both Corsica and Poland had been lost. Burke held that there was a respectable idea of Britain, “once the refuge and protectress of distressed nations”.⁴⁷² Burke concluded that the time will come, when the new system “will be seen in all its impotence and folly, and when the balance of power is destroyed”.⁴⁷³ These words were prophetic, when the disastrous American Revolutionary War broke out a year later after these debates, and Britain found themselves facing a European coalition, with no ally of note. However, the question remained: would Corsica be within British strategic thinking during any future war between Britain and France?

Arrival of Paoli in Britain September 1769: the initial reaction

Paoli’s progress across Europe en route to Britain received the attention of many prominent persons. Certain British writers were somewhat wary of Paoli’s eventual arrival in Britain. In the 14 September edition of the *Gazetteer*, the writer calling himself ‘A hater of mischief’ wrote of the “malevolence and destructive principles” of the sectaries and republicans in Britain.⁴⁷⁴ The British government was not in the healthiest condition: the Duke of Grafton’s ministry (1768-1770) was severely weakened by its perceived inability to act over the Corsican issue. Grafton (1735-1811) was in charge of a fractious ministry, which he had inherited from his predecessor, the Earl of Chatham (1708-1778). This was coupled with the agitation created by John Wilkes (1725-1797) and the ‘Society For The Supporters Of The Bill of Rights’. John Wilkes was a radical journalist and politician, who famously was

⁴⁷⁰ *Middlesex Journal*, 24-26 May 1774.

⁴⁷¹ *Middlesex Journal*, 24-26 May 1774.

⁴⁷² *Middlesex Journal*, 24-26 May 1774.

⁴⁷³ *Middlesex Journal*, 24-26 May 1774.

⁴⁷⁴ ‘For the *Gazetteer*’, *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 14 September 1769; Issue 12648.

charged with writing a seditious libel upon the King's speech, following the Peace of Paris in 1763. Wilkes remained in exile in France for years, until returning to Britain in 1768. He was elected to the Middlesex constituency in the same year of his return to Britain. Wilkes was imprisoned in the King's bench prison on 10 May 1768 after his election victory, and was eventually expelled from parliament in February 1769, on the grounds that he was an outlaw when he returned. The Society For The Supporters Of The Bill of Rights was formed after Wilkes' expulsion from parliament. The Society felt that Wilkes encapsulated traditional British liberties, and the rights of voters. This was evidenced in an address Wilkes gave to his constituents of Middlesex in November 1768, delivered from his prison cell. Wilkes proclaimed himself to be "a faithful guardian of the civil and religious liberties of the people of England, strenuous and unwearied in my endeavours to destroy all the remains of despotic power among our freeborn countrymen".⁴⁷⁵ Wilkes' belief that the current ministry was a corrupt tyrannical body, was a view similarly held by the Society.

The Society was originally formed to pay off the mounting debts accumulated over the years by Wilkes and believed that King George III (1738-1820) had used his royal prerogative to invade the rights of electors and their representatives. They named themselves after the Bill of Rights of 1689, which was originally legislated to place limits upon the King's power. The Society aspired restore the principles of the Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689, which, in their opinion, embodied true British liberties. 'A hater of mischief' believed that this opposition group excited every artifice of mischief "under the specious garb of right of liberty".⁴⁷⁶ The writer claimed that the Society was becoming acquainted with Paoli in Holland, and that they intended to "retard" his arrival "till they were prepared to received him in that manner which will best promote their machinations".⁴⁷⁷ There was a genuine fear that Paoli would simply become an instrument of the opposition. Many republican writers and members of the Society had previously been the most zealous English champions of Paoli and the Corsicans. 'A hater of mischief' wrote that the "fomenters of rebellion" would convert Paoli, whom they "denominate their hero in the cause of freedom, to become a

⁴⁷⁵ *Annual Register or a view of the History, Politics and Literature for the Year 1768*, 5th ed. (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, 1796), 183.

⁴⁷⁶ *Gazetteer*, 14 September 1769.

⁴⁷⁷ *Gazetteer*, 14 September 1769.

sedition demagogue and incendiary to outrage”.⁴⁷⁸ During the Corsican crisis, Corsica’s liberty and democratic form of government, were the primary factors that motivated British writers to espouse their cause. In September 1769 however the situation had changed: liberty and the cause of freedom was now strongly identified with the opposition. Before Paoli had set one foot in England, he had already become embroiled in British the political debates. Whether he could remain a political neutral remained uncertain.

Paoli arrived in England on 18 September 1769 at Harwich. Two days later he arrived in London. Paoli was certainly popular with the elite gentleman of England. For example, Lord Lyttelton (1709-1773) had become a well known supporter of the Corsicans after Boswell had written to him of the matter in 1768. Lyttelton, in a letter to Boswell dated 3 October 1769, wrote that he was “proud as an Englishman that he [Paoli] has chosen England for the place of his retreat”.⁴⁷⁹ He also wanted Boswell to tell Paoli that “he has not a warmer admirer in all this kingdom than me”.⁴⁸⁰ This sentiment was typical of those who admired Paoli and the Corsican cause. Paoli’s progress and activities in England were studiously noted during these early months, especially by the newspapers. The 20-22 September edition of *Lloyd’s Evening Post* commented that Paoli had waited upon the Duke of Grafton at his house in Arlington Street, and had now taken a house up in Dover Street.⁴⁸¹ The 21-23 September edition of the *London Chronicle* noted that Paoli had been visited by the Duke of Queens borough and other members of the nobility.⁴⁸² Within the postscript, the *London Chronicle* noted that the previous Thursday Paoli had visited the Marquis of Rockingham (1730-1782), a former prime minister, at his house, and within the next week, he would be introduced to the royal family; Paoli was frequently visited by the most important members of state.⁴⁸³

478 *Gazetteer*, 14 September 1769.

479 ‘Lord Lyttelton to James Boswell, 3 October 1769’, *The General Correspondence of James Boswell, 1766-1769*, vol. 2 1768-1769, ed. Richard Cole, (London: Yale University press, 1997), 246.

480 ‘Lord Lyttelton to Boswell, 3 October, 1769, 246.

481 *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, 20-22 September 1769; Issue 1906.

482 *London Chronicle*, 21-23 September 1769; Issue 1993.

483 *London Chronicle*, 21-23 September 1769.

The 27-29 September Edition of the *Lloyd's Evening Post* recorded that on 28 September, Paoli was at court and introduced to the king. Afterwards, Paoli was recorded to have had a long conference with both the king and the Duke of Grafton. What were Paoli's intentions during these negotiations? Clearly, as the 23-26 September edition of the *Middlesex Journal* noted, Paoli had visited England not merely to satisfy his curiosity, but to consult the ministry for a "plan of expelling the French from Corsica, in case of any future rupture between them and Great Britain".⁴⁸⁴ Paoli's intentions had changed after arriving in England. In a letter to Count Rivarola, dated 23rd September 1769, Paoli noted that the English were "intrigued" by both "America and Wilkes", and therefore divided.⁴⁸⁵ The British ministry believed that Paoli had attempted "to excite the crowds", to use for his own advantage.⁴⁸⁶ The ministry feared that Paoli's influence could be used to excite opposition against themselves. Paoli informed Rivarola that this was not the case; "I'm not English" and "my only aim is to Corsica".⁴⁸⁷ Paoli was not interested in involving himself with the domestic politics of Britain: gathering British support in order to regain Corsica from the French was his only aim. However, as he himself noted, it would be "difficult to find such a stopgap between people particularly fiery and suspicious".⁴⁸⁸ Paoli also mentioned to Rivarola that "I do not know how to bring myself: I'll do what I can and for the common cause and to keep my personal decorum".⁴⁸⁹ The question for Paoli was whether he could maintain his political neutrality? As he mentioned to Rivarola, "it is difficult to maintain the confidence of all".⁴⁹⁰

The Samuel Vaughan controversy, October 1769

Paoli's discussions with the ministry gained a wide range of criticism, especially from the Society For The Supporters Of The Bill of Rights. The same *Middlesex Journal* edition of 23-26 September that had noted Paoli's meeting with the king also believed it remarkable that Paoli was visited by the same political party who had issued the proclamation in 1763. The Proclamation of 1763 had previously forbade any Britons

484 'London', *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty*, 23-26 September 1769, Issue 76.

485 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 182.

486 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 182.

487 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 182.

488 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 182.

489 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 183.

490 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 182.

from having any relations with the Corsican rebels. In contrast, Paoli had not “the gratitude to pay any visit to those friends of liberty who voluntarily subscribed” and remitted to him “many thousands of pounds”.⁴⁹¹ The *Middlesex Journal* was a well known opposition paper, named after the constituency Wilkes was elected to in 1768. The article concluded that the efforts of the ‘friends of liberty’s’ were “fruitless in supporting a man who has deserted the cause”.⁴⁹² Only a few months earlier, the writers of the *Middlesex Journal* had been the unabashed supporters of Paoli: now they were attacking his person and character. How did this situation come about?

Paoli’s fallout with the Society began with Samuel Vaughan. Samuel Vaughan (1720-1802) was a prominent Wilkite activist and founding member of the Society. He was one of the zealous ‘friends of liberty’ who had promoted the Corsican cause during the French invasion of the island. His previous support for the Corsicans led Boswell to write a letter to Vaughan, dated 22 September 1769. Boswell wanted to introduce Paoli to Vaughan, as he was “one who so generously exerted himself for the brave Corsicans”.⁴⁹³ Vaughan replied to Boswell in a letter dated 26 September 1769, informing Boswell that “as much as I have admired and revered the late distressed patriot, I equally despise a vain-glorious sycophant”.⁴⁹⁴ This remarkable change in opinion from Vaughan stemmed from Paoli’s courtship with Grafton and the ministry.

Vaughan’s personal opinions upon the matter were more deep rooted, however. Several months after the events, Vaughan most likely wrote *An Appeal to the public on behalf of Samuel Vaughan; in a full and impartial narrative with the Duke of Grafton* (1770). The title gave away the intention of the pamphlet. Vaughan was involved in a high profile court case with the Duke of Grafton concerning “an attempt to corrupt a prime minister”.⁴⁹⁵ Vaughan was a very wealthy man who owned plantations in the West Indies. It was alleged that Vaughan, who had purchased the office of clerk to the

⁴⁹¹ *Middlesex Journal*, 23-26 September 1769.

⁴⁹² *Middlesex Journal*, 23-26 September 1769.

⁴⁹³ ‘James Boswell to Samuel Vaughan, 22 September 1769’, *The General Correspondence of James Boswell*, 239.

⁴⁹⁴ ‘Samuel Vaughan to James Boswell, 26 September 1769’, *The General Correspondence of James Boswell*, 244.

⁴⁹⁵ Samuel Vaughan, *An Appeal to the Public on behalf of Samuel Vaughan, Esq; in a full and Impartial Narrative of his Negotiation with the Duke of Grafton* (London: Printed for E. and C. Dilly, 1770), 3.

supreme court of Jamaica in 1765, had in June 1769 offered Grafton £5000 for the reversion of this office to the lifetimes of his three sons.⁴⁹⁶ Vaughan's eldest son, Benjamin Vaughan (1751-1835) was later a political ally of Lord Shelburne. Perhaps most famously, Benjamin was one of the commissioners who helped to negotiate the Treaty of Paris in 1783, which ended the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). Ultimately, Samuel Vaughan's case was never brought to trial. However, the case left a lasting blot upon his public reputation. This in turn prompted the publication of the pamphlet to defend Vaughan's name and honour. The *Appeal to the public* also contained the correspondence between Vaughan, Boswell and Paoli. The pamphlet claimed that "there cannot be a doubt the ministry were acquainted" with the following correspondence, as it was "happening at the very time that Mr. Vaughan was threatened with a prosecution".⁴⁹⁷ Vaughan believed that Paoli had provided evidence for Grafton. Paoli's involvement with the ministry had led Vaughan to believe that Paoli was an instrument of the ministry, and therefore involved in the case against himself.

Paoli refused to involve himself with any particular political party: he was only interested in gaining support for the Corsicans. As previously mentioned, Paoli claimed that his 'only aim is to Corsica'. Vaughan believed that Paoli would embrace the opposition. The ministry had done little to aid the Corsicans during the French invasion of that island. Therefore, Vaughan could not understand why Paoli would be willing to work with the ministry. Vaughan was one of many to believe that Britain was on the decline following the Seven Years War. Many writers prophesied the decline and fall of the British Empire. One of the most prominent was David Hume (1711-1776), a Scottish philosopher, historian and writer. Hume's *Essay's Moral, Political and Literary* (1758) dealt with a wide range of subjects. His essay *Of Public Credit* dealt specifically with the issue that Britain would need to "mortgage the public revenues, and to trust that posterity will pay off the incumbrances contracted by their ancestors".⁴⁹⁸ Britain's public debt was based exclusively upon the "confidence of its

⁴⁹⁶ Vaughan, *An Appeal to the Public*, 7.

⁴⁹⁷ Vaughan, *An Appeal to the Public*, 133.

⁴⁹⁸ David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1894), 252.

riches”.⁴⁹⁹ Hume believed that the practice of public debt was “ruinous beyond all controversy”, and could only lead to Britain suffering “poverty, impotence, and [being] subject to foreign powers”.⁵⁰⁰ Hume believed that only two events could result from the building of public credit; “either the nation will destroy public credit, or public credit will destroy the nation”.⁵⁰¹ When speaking specifically upon foreign affairs Hume thought that, due the huge public debts, it would be difficult for Britain to maintain the prodigious power obtained during the recent wars, “where we have so much exceed, not only our own natural strength, but even that of the greatest empires”.⁵⁰² The wars fought during the eighteenth century had resulted in Britain becoming the pre-eminent power in Europe. However, this dominance was under direct threat due the major public debts gained from these wars. Hume wrote that “our foreign enemies may be so politic as to discover that our safety lies in despair”.⁵⁰³ There was widespread fear that Britain’s main enemy France, would eventually outstrip Britain in military and economic strength. Hume blamed this situation upon public credit. The ‘absurd’ system of contracting debt, was “almost infallibly abused in every government”, and was not patronized by ‘great’ ministers.⁵⁰⁴ The government was directly responsible for the fostering and growth of public debt. Hume wrote that the balance of power in Europe, was regarded by our grandfathers, fathers and ourselves as “too unequal to be preserved without our attention and assistance”.⁵⁰⁵ But our children, the next generation, “weary of the struggle, and fettered with incumbrances, may sit down secure, and see their neighbours oppressed and conquered; till, at last, they themselves and their creditors lie both at the mercy of the conqueror”.⁵⁰⁶ This was the gloomy picture Hume painted for Britain.

Government indifference to the ‘oppression’ of their neighbours was clearly evident to many Britons in the 1760s and 1770s. This was highlighted by the debates concerning Lord North’s speech opening the budget in 1774. The ‘loss’ of Corsica and Poland

499 Hume, *Essays*, 252.

500 Hume, *Essays*, 252-253.

501 Hume, *Essays*, 260.

502 Hume, *Essays*, 258.

503 Hume, *Essays*, 263.

504 Hume, *Essays*, 253.

505 Hume, *Essays*, 263.

506 Hume, *Essays*, 263.

were perceived to indicate Britain's decline as a world power. The 29 August 1775 edition of the *Morning Post* followed Hume's argument concerning the decline of Britain following the Seven Years War. The author of the article, who called themselves 'Crito', complained of the "sacrifice of our national honour and dignity" which "had taken place in every transaction of foreign politics from 1760 to this day".⁵⁰⁷ The blame was laid solely at the feet of the ministry. Vaughan believed that the ministry's corruption and weakness were also highlighted in the case presented against himself. Vaughan's opposition to Grafton and the ministry was at a political and personal level. Vaughan wrote the *Appeal to the Public* in order to defend his public credentials. Despite the claims made against him, Vaughan would not, even at this critical juncture, "suppress his sentiments, however repugnant to those in power", which he felt most probably "contributed not a little to the persecution raised against him".⁵⁰⁸ Vaughan's personal situation and political beliefs contributed to his harsh censure of Paoli. It is only within this context, that Vaughan's subsequent letters between himself, Paoli and Boswell can be understood: Vaughan perceived Paoli to be an instrument of a ministry which had failed the British nation.

The next letter in the correspondence was a letter from Mr Frederick, on behalf of Paoli, to Samuel Vaughan, dated 29 September 1769. Frederick Neuhoff (1725-1797) claimed to be the son of the late Theodore Neuhoff (1694-1756). Theodore was a German nobleman who had been crowned King of Corsica in 1736 and had reigned very briefly. Frederick had published his own *Memoirs of Corsica* (1769), and quickly became an acquaintance of Paoli upon his arrival in Britain. Paoli apologized to Vaughan for not having had an opportunity "to assure him of his gratitude" for Vaughan's actions regarding the Corsicans and expressed "an extreme desire to testify that gratitude in person".⁵⁰⁹ Paoli was attempting to appeal to both the opposition and ministry: he was trying to involve himself with anyone who was interested in Corsica. Vaughan replied to Paoli a letter, dated 2 October 1769, "to assign his reasons, for passing so harsh a censure" on Paoli, in his letter to Boswell.⁵¹⁰ Vaughan mistrusted

⁵⁰⁷ *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 29 August 1775; Issue 886.

⁵⁰⁸ Vaughan, *An Appeal to the Public*, 133.

⁵⁰⁹ Vaughan, *An Appeal to the Public*, 134.

⁵¹⁰ Vaughan, *An Appeal to the Public*, 134.

“the private manner in which he [Paoli] came from Holland to London”.⁵¹¹ The General had concealed “his abode above a week after his arrival in London”, which prevented Vaughan from paying his immediate compliments to Paoli.⁵¹² During the time of Paoli’s concealment, “the General had been in private treaty with the ministry separately”.⁵¹³ The General, according to Vaughan, had treated with the ministry as he had “been informed that the opposition were composed of the dregs and refuse of the people”.⁵¹⁴ Whether this was the real reason Paoli chose to gain support from the ministry instead from the opposition, remained doubtful. As the Corsican crisis illustrated, only full support from the British government could possibly enable Paoli to regain Corsica. Paoli, through seeking this support, was inevitably dragged into the political debates troubling the British polis.

Vaughan was led to conclude that “the General had been brought over by the ministry”, and “had deserted the noble cause of liberty”.⁵¹⁵ Vaughan however would be “extremely happy to find cause to alter his opinion”, and hoped that Paoli was “animated with the same divine spirit, and determined to stand forth, as heretofore, the defender of the unalienable rights of mankind.”⁵¹⁶ This sentiment highlighted the real intentions of the opposition for Paoli. They hoped Paoli would become the emblem of liberty for the opposition, and to use him as a figurehead against the ministry. Vaughan and other opposition leaders were offended when Paoli sought the help of the ‘tyrannical’ ministry, despite being an avid supporter of liberty. Vaughan in particular could not understand why Paoli would seek help from a ministry which had done so little for Corsica previously. The ministry had failed the British nation since the Seven Years War: Britain was terminally on the decline due to the misguided policy of successive ministries since 1763. Could Paoli expect the same ministry, which had failed to help Corsica against the French invasion, to provide aid for his restoration to the island?

511 Vaughan, *An Appeal to the Public*, 134.

512 Vaughan, *An Appeal to the Public*, 135.

513 Vaughan, *An Appeal to the Public*, 135.

514 Vaughan, *An Appeal to the Public*, 135.

515 Vaughan, *An Appeal to the Public*, 135.

516 Vaughan, *An Appeal to the Public*, 135.

The *Appeal to the Public* contained two further letters between Vaughan and Boswell, which I also found in Boswell's own correspondence. Boswell, in a letter of reply to Vaughan dated 5 October 1769, noted that he was "a little surprised with your letter to me".⁵¹⁷ Boswell wrote that Paoli spent many years at the head of a nation, having to deal with various courts. With this knowledge, Paoli knew "what was the conduct most proper to promote the interests of his country, than you could do".⁵¹⁸ Boswell acknowledged that support from the ministry was the only way for Paoli to regain Corsica from the French. Boswell attacked Vaughan's apparent ignorance on this subject. He also had seen the letter Vaughan had sent to Paoli on 2 October, "in which you explain yourself".⁵¹⁹ From this letter, Boswell described that Paoli had seen Vaughan's motives and point of view, and that he had "been mislead [sic], and therefore heartily excuses you".⁵²⁰ If Vaughan would wait upon Paoli, "he will with pleasure set you right, and convince you that your suspicions are without foundation whatsoever".⁵²¹ Paoli, according to Boswell, had wanted to explain himself to Vaughan, and assure that all of the opposition's suspicions were false.

To place Vaughan's and the opposition's attacks upon Paoli merely as stemming from misunderstanding does not reveal the full story. Paoli certainly had played a political game; he had avoided important opposition members such as Vaughan in order to gain more support from the ministry. Vaughan, in his letter of reply to Boswell, dated 6 October, stated that he was pleased to find that Paoli and Boswell "are of opinion appearances gave cause for my conjectures".⁵²² Vaughan claimed that if he had had access to the general upon his arrival in the kingdom he would have advised him "to have joined no party whatever".⁵²³ Vaughan believed that Paoli's object as a foreigner, was "to have preserved an uniformity, consistency and dignity of character".⁵²⁴ This statement, however, was in complete contradiction of Vaughan's letter to Paoli on 2

517 'James Boswell to Samuel Vaughan, 5 October 1769, *The General Correspondence of James Boswell*, 247.

518 'Boswell to Vaughan, 5 October 1769, 247.

519 'Boswell to Vaughan, 5 October 1769, 247.

520 'Boswell to Vaughan, 5 October 1769, 247.

521 'Boswell to Vaughan, 5 October 1769, 247.

522 'Samuel Vaughan to James Boswell, 6 October 1769, *The General Correspondence of James Boswell*, 250.

523 'Vaughan to Boswell, 6 October 1769, 250.

524 'Vaughan to Boswell, 6 October 1769, 250.

October. As previously noted, Vaughan was outraged that Paoli had ‘deserted’ the noble cause of liberty by seeking the support of the ministry. He also wrote in the letter that Paoli had refused to affiliate with the opposition, as they were the ‘dregs’ of society. Perhaps with hindsight, Vaughan had come to the conclusion that Paoli should have remained politically neutral. Vaughan finally understood that if the ministry had offered effectual support for the recovery of Corsica, Paoli as a patriot, may have been induced “to suffer his personal honour to be sullied for the obtaining so great an end” for his people.⁵²⁵ However, Vaughan certainly believed that Paoli had shown far more public support to the ministry than the opposition. The *Appeal to the Public* recorded that Vaughan’s letter to Boswell, dated the 6 October 1769, was the last of the correspondence. Why the correspondence ended at this moment remains unknown. Whether Boswell believed that any attempt to convince Vaughan was meaningless remains open to speculation. Or perhaps Paoli did not believe that there was any need to build bridges with the opposition now that he had support from the ministry. Paoli’s public fallout with Samuel Vaughan triggered his condemnation from other opposition leaders. The next section will show the development of the oppositions arguments against Paoli in October and November 1769.

Evaluation of the Opposition’s argument from October to November 1769

The controversy surrounding Paoli’s arrival in Britain was formulated around a number of perceived insults against the opposition. Samuel Vaughan was the first major opposition member to publicly condemn Paoli’s affiliation with the ministry. Other opposition writers would follow Vaughan’s example in the months of October and November 1769. I will now look in detail at each of the main reasons why the opposition believed Paoli had abandoned the cause of liberty. The best contemporary summary of the controversy during these months was the pamphlet *A Review of the conduct of Pascal Paoli. Addressed the Rt. Hon. William Beckford, Lord Mayor of the City of London* (1770). The writer, who remained anonymous, began by describing that the arrival of Paoli in Britain “hath occasioned more speculation, and given rise to more warm disputes, than any event which hath happened for along series of years”.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁵ ‘Vaughan to Boswell, 6 October 1769, 250.

⁵²⁶ *A Review of the Conduct of Pascal Paoli. Addressed to the Rt. Hon. William Beckford, Lord Mayor of the city of London*, (London: Printed for S.Blandon, 1770), 1.

The moment a ‘foreigner’ sets his foot on the “British grand”, they can expect to be “subjected to a severe examination”.⁵²⁷ A foreigner of Paoli’s stature would be felt as a challenge to the British establishment. Therefore his conduct would be scrutinized. The author placed this reasoning behind the controversy surrounding Paoli’s arrival in Britain. The *Review*, according to the writer, was “very much to be wanted at this juncture”; the following sheets were therefore “ventured to the public eye”.⁵²⁸ Paoli’s conduct within Britain was considered to be of public importance. The *Review* was addressed to Alderman Beckford (1709-1770) for two major reasons. The first was due to the fact that Beckford was “one of the spirited and generous committee for raising contributions on behalf of the brave Corsicans”.⁵²⁹ The second reason was that he held the grand and important office of chief magistrate to the city of London, “the noblest metropolis in the world”.⁵³⁰ It was to Beckford that “these sheets are addressed”; his position meant he “may have most considerable influence” enforcing the reflections made in the pamphlet.⁵³¹ This sentiment however was contradictory to the writer’s earlier assertion, that the pamphlet was ‘ventured to the public eye’. Thus the author wanted the work to be directed to Beckford, but in the most public manner possible.

There was also another reason why the author addressed their writings to Beckford, however. Beckford was one of the major opposition members to the government, and a known supporter of Wilkes. He was involved in one of the major perceived slights inflicted upon the opposition by Paoli. The 3-5 October edition of the *London Chronicle* reported that after a fortnight in England, Paoli sent compliments to Beckford, and wished for an opportunity to testify gratitude to the “generous care he had taken in support of the Corsicans”.⁵³² The paper reported that Beckford then called upon Paoli on that Sunday afternoon. Paoli, however, missed the meeting. The paper reported that Paoli had also sent Mrs. Macaulay a message that he would visit her upon the first opportunity. Catherine Macaulay (1731-1791) was, like Beckford, a supporter of the Corsican cause. Paoli had taken ‘ill’ before the arranged meeting. The *London Chronicle* reported that “Mrs Macaulay has neither seen or heard of him since, though

⁵²⁷ *A Review of the Conduct of Pascal Paoli*, 2.

⁵²⁸ *A Review of the Conduct of Pascal Paoli*, 3.

⁵²⁹ *A Review of the Conduct of Pascal Paoli*, 4.

⁵³⁰ *A Review of the Conduct of Pascal Paoli*, 4.

⁵³¹ *A Review of the Conduct of Pascal Paoli*, 4.

⁵³² ‘To the Printer’, *London Chronicle*, 3-5 October 1769; Issue 1998.

he has been out every day”.⁵³³ The article questioned whether it can “be imagined that the General’s sudden illness was other than political?”⁵³⁴ If this was true, then did it not “prove that he [Paoli] is an abject slave in the freest country in Europe?”⁵³⁵ Paoli was certainly playing a political game: he was attempting to appeal to the ministry in order to gain the aid needed to regain Corsica from the French, so he could not be seen to be colluding with the opposition. The 10-12 October edition of the *London Chronicle* asked whether Paoli could be seen to be less worthy “because he has not visited the popular prisoner [Wilkes], the female historian [Macaulay], and the patriotic Alderman?”⁵³⁶ The newspaper concluded that Paoli was patronised by the government, and must under their protection “entirely adopt the mode of conduct offered for his observance”.⁵³⁷ Paoli was thus drawn into the political divisions in Britain. Paoli had to choose the side that most suited to his purposes. He had played the political game poorly, however, and therefore was criticised heavily for his mistakes.

The attacks on Paoli did not merely relate to his talks with the ministry. They returned back to Paoli’s conduct in Corsica during the French invasion. The *Review* contained an article from the 28 September edition of the *Middlesex Journal*. The writer of the article believed it was necessary to give the world “some authentic account of the late amazing conquest of Corsica”.⁵³⁸ The main issue centered around the fall of Corte, the Corsican capital, in June 1769. Boswell’s *Account of Corsica* had given the description that Corte was extremely difficult to take. Boswell had written of Corte’s “wonderful natural defences”: the capital was situated in the mountains and “may be defended with a handful of men, against very large armies.”⁵³⁹ To the contrary, French accounts, which appeared in British newspapers in June and July, reported “hardly any resistance” at Corte.⁵⁴⁰ The writer asked; “where was the great Paoli”? The reports assured that Paoli was not within ten miles of the capital. The article claimed that Paoli was mediating his own retreat, and “left his men to be an easy sacrifice to the

⁵³³ *London Chronicle*, October 3-5 1769.

⁵³⁴ *London Chronicle*, October 3-5 1769.

⁵³⁵ *London Chronicle*, October 3-5 1769.

⁵³⁶ ‘London’, *London Chronicle*, 10-12 October 1769; Issue 2001.

⁵³⁷ *London Chronicle*, October 10-12 1769.

⁵³⁸ *A Review of the Conduct of Pascal Paoli*, 8.

⁵³⁹ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 22.

⁵⁴⁰ *A Review of the Conduct of Pascal Paoli*, 8.

French”.⁵⁴¹ Boswell’s *Account of Corsica* still remained the main source of information for many Englishmen concerning Corsica, however. This became a problem for Paoli when he arrived in Britain. Boswell’s work hero worshipped Paoli in the most endearing language. The real man however would always seem to be lower than the standards set in Boswell’s *Account of Corsica*: expectations of Paoli’s character were elevated too high.

The 14-16 November 1769 edition of the *Middlesex Journal* believed that Paoli’s valour on Corsica would have been better proven “by standing his ground, instead of turning his heels to the French”.⁵⁴² Paoli should have appeared in the heart of his troops, defending his capital, rather than deserting it. Paoli’s late conduct in England “makes it plainly appear that he is no Leonidas”, the Spartan King who died with his men at Thermopylae in 480BC. Clearly, the writers of the newspapers had no understanding of the real situation during the fall of Corte. Peter Thrasher has commented correctly in his book *Pasquale Paoli* (1970), that Paoli’s defeat at Pontenuovo on May 4th 1769 left him with two options, either to fight a long guerrilla war against the French or to leave the island and find foreign aid. Paoli chose the latter, as he had no experience in guerrilla warfare, and did not wish to subject his countrymen the miseries of civil war.⁵⁴³ Despite this, Paoli’s defeat made him susceptible to attacks over his conduct in Corsica.

The *Middlesex Journal* was the main opposition paper, and was thus where the majority of the scathing attacks on Paoli could be found. Opposition writers believed that Paoli had betrayed the cause of liberty by appealing to the ministry. The *Review* noted that “the great and worthy amongst us, and the people in general, have received him [Paoli] as he could wish, and will every day, be more warmly interested for him and his cause”.⁵⁴⁴ Despite the mass criticisms of Paoli from the opposition, I found many public articles concerning Paoli to be positive. For example, 3-6 November 1769 edition of the *Lloyd’s Evening Post* described that Paoli was invited to the Lord

⁵⁴¹ *A Review of the Conduct of Pascal Paoli*, 9.

⁵⁴² ‘Postscript: London’, *Middlesex Journal*, 14-16 November 1769, Issue 98.

⁵⁴³ Peter Thrasher, *Pasquale Paoli: An Enlightened Hero 1725-1807*, (London: Archon books, 1970), 153-154.

⁵⁴⁴ *A Review of the Conduct of Pascal Paoli*, 14.

Mayors Day entertainment, “which will doubtless bring numbers to see that great, though unfortunate chief”.⁵⁴⁵ Paoli was still described as ‘great’: his situation was considered to be ‘unfortunate’. The 17-20 November 1769 edition of the *Independent Chronicle* believed the pension Paoli was to receive from the government to be “poor compensation” for Britain “betraying him to the French”.⁵⁴⁶ Newspaper articles concerning Paoli were generally split between those supporting him, and those criticising him. The writings and accusations by the opposition were not necessarily intended as attacks directly on Paoli, but rather his affiliation with the ministry. Paoli was now merely a pawn caught within the political debates and arguments between opposition and ministry. Writers who criticised Paoli’s conduct were generally from the opposition. Those who supported Paoli were writers who supported the ministry. The writer of the *Review*, for example, was most definitely writing for the government, as evidenced from his belief that it was Paoli’s “duty to restrain his feelings, to assume the moderation of the cabinet, and if our ministry have been wrong, to endeavour to set them right”.⁵⁴⁷ The writer believed that the ministry could still correct its previous mistakes and aid the Corsicans. Thus, the *Review* was a defence of Paoli and the ministry.

Paoli’s affiliation with the ministry was the catalyst for the oppositions attacks upon his person, which forced him to place himself more firmly in the ministry camp. Paoli himself did not seem too fussed by the oppositions abandonment of the Corsicans cause. In a letter to his brother Clemente dated 29 November 1769, Paoli noted that some “wished to avail myself to fight the ministry”.⁵⁴⁸ The English, “seeing a stranger to the intrigues, the anti-ministerial writers lash out against me: but what does that matter? It makes deaf ear to these cries in London”.⁵⁴⁹ Paoli referenced the continuing popularity he still had amongst the masses in London. Whether Paoli’s popularity in Britain would remain as strong in the future was questionable, considering the fickle nature of the British public. Paoli arrived in England with a clear plan to gather as much support for the Corsican cause as possible. This is evidenced by Paoli’s letters

⁵⁴⁵ ‘Postscript: London’, *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, 3-6 November 1769; Issue 1925.

⁵⁴⁶ ‘London’, *Independent Chronicle*, 17-20 November 1769; Issue 23.

⁵⁴⁷ *A Review of the Conduct of Pascal Paoli*, 21.

⁵⁴⁸ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 185.

⁵⁴⁹ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 185.

concerning France. In a letter to his brother Clemente, dated 3 November 1769, Paoli believed that the French “can not flatter himself to govern” Corsica; their rule would only result in the destruction of “the spirit of freedom”.⁵⁵⁰ Paoli maintained an anti-French tone throughout his letters. He once complained to Count Rivarola that “I’m in the dark of the things in Corsica, when I should be informed with the greatest precision”.⁵⁵¹ Paoli wanted constant updates regarding French rule of Corsica. Corsica was constantly at the forefront of Paoli’s thoughts and plans. The loss of support from the opposition was a blow. However, this was only of secondary importance to the attitude of the ministry, the support of which was far more highly sought after by Paoli. Only British government support would enable Corsica to be retaken from the French. With the oppositions abandonment of the Corsican cause, Paoli was left even more reliant upon ministry support. Paoli’s only care, however, was for Corsica.

Paoli and the ministry 1769-1772

As previously noted, Paoli had multiple meetings with various ministers of state and nobility, including the Duke of Grafton. On the 26 September Paoli had a meeting with the king. The historian Moray McLaren believes that Paoli’s “improbable” meeting with the king was due to the fact that Boswell’s book “made the figure of the General well known”.⁵⁵² Boswell’s *Account of Corsica* had propelled the island to the forefront of public knowledge. To what extent did Boswell’s influence result in Paoli’s meeting with the king? It seems doubtful that the king merely wanted to meet the figure described in Boswell’s *Account of Corsica*. Paoli himself was quite clear over what his intentions were for the meeting. In a letter to his brother Clemente, dated the 3rd October 1769, Paoli wrote that he was “well received by the king and queen”, and that several ministers had called upon him.⁵⁵³ Paoli hoped to “obtain something for the support of our exiled fellow-countrymen, if Vienna does nothing”.⁵⁵⁴ Clemente Paoli (1711-1794) was a priest and commander of the Corsicans during his brother’s rule of the island and was a constant pillar of support for his younger brother. Many Corsicans were exiled in the Duchy of Tuscany, including Clemente. Tuscany was governed by

⁵⁵⁰ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 185.

⁵⁵¹ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 183.

⁵⁵² Moray McLaren, *Corsica Boswell*, 163.

⁵⁵³ Paoli, Paoli, “Paoli to Clemente, 3 October 1769”, Moray McLaren, *Corsica Boswell*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1966), 172.

⁵⁵⁴ Paoli, “Paoli to Clemente, 1769”, *Corsica Boswell*, 173.

Leopold II (1747-1792), brother of the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II. The Austrian government seems to have provided little financial support for the Corsican exiles in Tuscany. Paoli hoped to gain financial support from the British government for the Corsican exiles. He wanted Clemente to send an accurate list of all our ‘friends’ who have gone into exile; “we must not be afraid of expense”.⁵⁵⁵ Paoli’s language here suggested that he had made some headway gaining British financial support for the Corsican exiles. Paoli told Clemente that the king had “spoken to me very earnestly of the affair”.⁵⁵⁶ Paoli believed that the eyes of the British people were “beginning to be opened”; they now “acknowledge the importance of Corsica”.⁵⁵⁷ Britain was obliged to temporize regarding France for the moment; their hands were “tied at present”.⁵⁵⁸ Paoli however believed that Britain “will be ready” for any war that may occur out with France.⁵⁵⁹

War between Britain and France certainly seemed a close possibility in late 1769-1770, especially with the Duc de Choiseul in charge of French policy. Choiseul (1719-1785) was France’s chief minister from 1766-1770; his primary policy was to rebuild France’s strength following the disastrous Seven Years War (1756-1763). More importantly, he aimed to do this at the expense of France’s chief rival Britain. Peter Thrasher, in his book *Pasquale Paoli* (1970) has stated that Paoli’s plan was to keep Corsica in the public eye, “until Choiseul’s aggressive policy produced, as Paoli thought it eventually must, a conflict between France and England”.⁵⁶⁰ As Thrasher notes, Paoli’s presence was “to remind the English politicians of the continued existence of the Corsican question”.⁵⁶¹ Paoli’s aim was to gain as much support for the Corsican cause as possible, in the event of a future war between Britain and France. This sentiment was evident in Paoli’s letter to Count Rivarola, dated 20 December 1769. Paoli noted that there was “no doubt that the occupation of Corsica by many powers was considered as a breach of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle”.⁵⁶² He hoped at

⁵⁵⁵ Paoli, “Paoli to Clemente, 1769”, *Corsica Boswell*, 173.

⁵⁵⁶ Paoli, “Paoli to Clemente, 1769”, *Corsica Boswell*, 173.

⁵⁵⁷ Paoli, “Paoli to Clemente, 1769”, *Corsica Boswell*, 173.

⁵⁵⁸ Paoli, “Paoli to Clemente, 1769”, *Corsica Boswell*, 173.

⁵⁵⁹ Paoli, “Paoli to Clemente, 1769”, *Corsica Boswell*, 173.

⁵⁶⁰ Thrasher, *Pasquale Paoli*, 164.

⁵⁶¹ Thrasher, *Pasquale Paoli*, 165.

⁵⁶² Paoli, *Lettres*, 3rd Serie, 369.

the first sign of a new war between Britain and France, the point concerning Corsica “will be taken into account”.⁵⁶³ The treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle ended the War of the Austrian Succession in 1748, “was one of the principal bases on which lean the public right of Europe”.⁵⁶⁴ Paoli was sure that any change to the balance of power of Europe would concern both Britain and Austria. Austria were especially interested that the treaty “does not suffer the slightest alteration”.⁵⁶⁵ This was due to the House of Austria’s vested interest in the territories they possessed in Italy. Paoli, as previously noted in his letter to Clemente, believed that he was more likely to gain the support he needed from Britain rather than Austria.

How successful was Paoli in gaining active British governmental support for Corsica? He did receive a very generous pension from the British government. Various sources give conflicting figures, however, for the amount of Paoli’s pension. Thrasher placed the figure at £1200 per year.⁵⁶⁶ The 17-20 November 1769 edition of the *Independent Chronicle* recorded the amount to be £1000 per year.⁵⁶⁷ However, the most reliable source I found concerning the amount per year Paoli received as a pension comes from George III’s own correspondence. The correspondence contained an ‘Account of money expended for foreign secret services by Lord Grantham’. The account was dated for the year 1782, some 10 years after the events, which gave the expense of Paoli’s pension as £1500 per year.⁵⁶⁸ Whether Paoli’s pension increased during his time in England remains unknown. Despite the obvious support Paoli had from the British government, however, there remained one problem for his plan; war between Britain and France needed to break out. Paoli himself was aware of this fact, as is highlighted in his letter to Rivarola, dated 20 December 1769. Paoli wrote that it was “true that the war can be far away”; however it was also true that “this tranquillity is increasingly insecure while it lasts, especially the split between the Porte and

⁵⁶³ Paoli, *Lettres 3rd Serie*, 369.

⁵⁶⁴ Paoli, *Lettres, 3rd Serie*, 369.

⁵⁶⁵ Paoli, *Lettres, 3rd Serie*, 369.

⁵⁶⁶ Thrasher, *Pasquale Paoli*, 165: the majority of historians place the figure at £1200 per annum.

⁵⁶⁷ ‘London’, *Independent Chronicle*, 17-20 November 1769, Issue 23.

⁵⁶⁸ ‘Account of money expended for foreign secret services by Lord Grantham’, *The Correspondence of King George The Third: From 1760 to December 1783*, vol. VI May 1782- December 1783, ed. Sir John Fortesque, (London: Macmillan and Co, 1928), 344.

Muscovy”.⁵⁶⁹ Paoli referenced the growing hostilities between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. France was a known ally and supporter of the Turks. Paoli was kept up to date with the latest news concerning continental Europe. Due to the inter-connected nature of European politics, Paoli believed that “wars do not move with deliberate intention, but always arise when least expected, and a hundred incidents do that they can not avoid”.⁵⁷⁰ Paoli remained optimistic that a future European scale war would erupt, which would inevitably involve Britain, France and ultimately Corsica.

Paoli informed his friend Raimondo Cocchi in a letter dated the 8 January 1770, that “Parliament opens tomorrow, I’ll go there”.⁵⁷¹ Raimondo Cocchi (died 1775) was a learned Florentine physician and a supporter of the Corsican cause. He was also author of the little read work *Letters on Corsica*. The King’s speech opening parliament enabled Paoli to ‘speculate’ upon what the Commons would be discussing in the first part of the year. For Paoli, it was obvious that parliament would set out a peaceful plan, “because no one is on time, although I think all satiate too long a peace”.⁵⁷² There would be no immediate threat of war. Paoli however also noted that certain British politicians had hoped not for a ‘too long peace’ between Britain and France. The Duke of Grafton left office at the end January 1770 and was replaced by Lord North (1732-1792) and his ministry (1770-1782). North was prime minister during the majority of Paoli’s exile in England. Paoli recorded in his letter to Burnaby, dated 4 March 1770, that Lord Chatham spoke “on the interest that there was not to leave Corsica to France”.⁵⁷³ Andrew Burnaby (1732-1812) was British travel writer, and Chaplain to the British mission at Leghorn from 1762-1767. He visited Corsica in 1766, and wrote his own *Journal of a tour of Corsica*, which was only published in 1804. Burnaby was a correspondent of both Paoli and Boswell. Paoli noted in his letter to Burnaby a change in parliamentary proceedings from the first two months of 1770. Paoli informed Burnaby that “there was talk in the House [Of Lords] to the increase of sailors to get in

569 Paoli, *Lettres De Pascal Paoli, 3rd Serie*, Ed Doctor Perelli, (Bastia: Imprimerie et Libraire Ve Eugéne Ollagnier, 1890), 370.

570 Paoli, *Lettres, 3rd Serie*, 370.

571 Paoli, *Lettres De Pascal Paoli, 5th Serie*, Ed Doctor Perelli, (Bastia: Imprimerie et Libraire Ollagnier, 1899), 176.

572 Paoli, *Lettres, 5th Serie*, 176.

573 Paoli, *Lettres, 5th Serie*, 176.

a state of defence in view of hostile preparations of the House of Bourbon”.⁵⁷⁴ Large opposition from certain Lords in parliament led to the defeat of the motion.

There were unmistakable tensions between Britain and the two Bourbon powers, France and Spain, which would become manifest in hostilities during the Falklands crisis in June 1770. The crisis began following the Spanish seizure of the Falkland Islands from British settlers. War became a real possibility, especially when France supported their ally Spain in the dispute. The Falklands crisis was discussed at length in the House of Lords on the 22 September 1770. These particular debates best encapsulated the discussions concerning the crisis. Lord Weymouth (1734-1796) was Secretary of State for the southern department from 1768-1770. During the majority of the eighteenth century, there were two offices that dealt with domestic, colonial, and foreign affairs. The Northern department dealt with Northern Europe, whilst the Southern department dealt with southern Europe, including Corsica. Weymouth urged caution on the matter, arguing that conquests were not “ever made without an expense exceeding, greatly exceeding their intrinsic value”.⁵⁷⁵ In the ‘glorious’ wars Britain had previously engaged in, “the nation was still a sufferer”, especially with the large war debts incurred.⁵⁷⁶ Weymouth summed up the general attitude of Britain’s foreign policy during the early 1770s. There was a general desire to avoid conflicts with any European powers. The Earl of Hillsborough (1718-1793), Secretary of State for the colonies (1768-1772), added that the European world could potentially be plunged into a war for years, over “what may probably be effected by a negotiation of a few weeks”.⁵⁷⁷

Hillsborough perhaps summed up Britain’s new attitude in foreign policy best:

“the prosperity of the British Empire is founded upon peace; while the sword is sheathed, the arts are encouraged, the sciences extended- population spreads its blessings through our territories- abundance smiles in every quarter, and all is joy”.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁴ Paoli, *Lettres*, 5th Serie, 176.

⁵⁷⁵ Cobbett’s *Parliamentary history of England, from the earliest period to 1803*, vol. XVI, 1765-1771, ed. William Cobbett, (London: Printed by C.Hamsard, 1813), 1083.

⁵⁷⁶ Cobbett’s *Parliamentary history of England*, vol. XVI, 1083.

⁵⁷⁷ Cobbett’s *Parliamentary history of England*, vol. XVI, 1086.

⁵⁷⁸ Cobbett’s *Parliamentary history of England*, vol. XVI, 1089.

Britain was a commercial empire, whose chief wealth was industry and the number of its inhabitants. War would disrupt this prosperity. There were some who opposed this line of thought. The former prime minister, Lord Chatham argued that the first object of national defence was to maintain a superior naval force, larger than those of Spain and France combined.⁵⁷⁹ Chatham was Prime Minister during the Seven Years War and was one of the main advocates of Britain's continued dominance in European affairs. Lord Shelburne (1735-1805) maintained that the British government had such 'feeble', 'incompetent' hands, and "the reputation of the Kingdom is hourly given up".⁵⁸⁰ Although not directly referenced, the loss of Corsica was still in the back of Shelburne's mind. Shelburne was Secretary of the Southern department in 1768, during the 'Corsican crisis'. He resigned later that year due to a major falling out with his ministerial colleagues over the issue. The ghost of Corsica plagued the debates surrounding the Falklands crisis. Although never directly mentioned, discussions concerning Britain's reputation were clearly all the more potent, considering the perceived weakness of England's position from allowing the French to take Corsica. The Lords motion was 21 against, and 65 for the motion demanding more stern action concerning the Falklands crisis. In the end, no war came about. There was a general reluctance from the French regarding a war with Britain, especially from King Louis XV (1710-1774). Choiseul, the prime mover for war with Britain was dismissed in December 1770, leading the French to back down from their belligerent approach. The Spanish, without French support, eventually compromised, negotiating the return of the Falklands to Britain in January 1771, thereby ending the crisis.

Choiseul's dismissal from office in December 1770 put an end to any immediate hopes Paoli had for a war between Britain and France. However, this was not the entire story. There was a general reluctance from the British ministry to engage in any European wars. As the Earl of Hillsborough's speech indicated, Britain was now an empire following the conquests made during the Seven Years War. Their aim was to hold rather than expand the territories of the empire. The unrest in America further justified the need to avoid any European entanglements. Where was Paoli during this period? The King, in a letter to Lord North dated 8 July 1770 informed the Prime Minister that

⁵⁷⁹ *Cobbett's Parliamentary history of England*, vol. XVI, 1102.

⁵⁸⁰ *Cobbett's Parliamentary history of England*, vol. XVI, 1114.

the King himself was to receive General Paoli “at half hour past six on Thursday evening at the Queen’s house”.⁵⁸¹ Paoli kept in constant contact with the ministry and the King. The 24-26 January 1770 edition of the *Independent Chronicle* observed that Paoli “assiduously attends the levee of every minister almost ever since his arrival in England”.⁵⁸² George III’s correspondence mentioned the meetings Paoli had with the King. Lord North’s letter to the King, dated 13 February 1771, noted that North, in obedience to the King’s commands, had appointed Paoli to wait on his “majesty at Queen’s house this evening at seven o’clock”.⁵⁸³ The King’s letter to Lord North, dated 11 June 1772, saw a similar request by Paoli to be granted an audience with the king.⁵⁸⁴ What was Paoli’s aim during these meetings? The intent of Paoli was indicated in Lord North’s letter to the King, dated 12 June 1772. North sent this letter in response to the King’s letter from the previous day. North informed the King that he had been with Paoli all morning. North had informed Paoli that a payment of £1000 a month “could not be continued to the Corsicans who are in the Duchy of Tuscany longer than a twelve-month from this time”.⁵⁸⁵ Clearly, Paoli’s intention was to gain financial aid for the Corsican exiles in Tuscany, as indicated in his previous letter to Clemente. Paoli had been initially successful in this regard. This support however would be stopped by the end of the year. North explained to the King, that Paoli “remained with Lord North a considerable time”.⁵⁸⁶ The conversation ended with Paoli’s desire of an audience with the king, “at any time your majesty will please to appoint”.⁵⁸⁷

What can be gathered from these meetings Paoli had with Lord North and the King? Paoli was important enough to have continual meetings with the highest members of state. However, the positives ended there. Paoli was merely discussing financial aid for

581 ‘The King to Lord North, 8 July 1770’, *The Correspondence of King George The Third: From 1760 to December 1783*, vol. II, 1768-June 1773, ed. Sir John Fortesque, (London: Macmillan and Co, 1927), 153.

582 *Independent Chronicle*, 24-26 January 1770, Issue 52.

583 ‘Lord North to the King’, 13 February 1771’, *The Correspondence of King George The Third*, vol. II, 217.

584 ‘The King to Lord North’, 11 June 1772’, *The Correspondence of King George The Third*, vol. II, 353.

585 ‘Lord North to the King’, 12 June 1772’, *The Correspondence of King George The Third*, vol. II, 354.

586 ‘Lord North to the King’, 12 June 1772’, *The Correspondence of King George The Third*, vol. II, 354.

587 ‘Lord North to the King’, 12 June 1772’, *The Correspondence of King George The Third*, vol. II, 354.

the Corsican exiles, not military assistance to regain Corsica, and he seemed to have continual problems gaining necessary financial support. The Home Office papers contained a letter from Paoli to Lord Rochford, dated 6 March 1773. Rochford (1717-1781) was Secretary of the Southern department from 1770-1775. Paoli reminded Rochford of the “object of which he spoke on the last occasion”.⁵⁸⁸ Paoli informed Rochford that he “must communicate in time to his people in Tuscany the result of the request”, and wished to explain its importance by word of mouth.⁵⁸⁹ It can be gathered that Paoli’s ‘request’ of financial support for the Corsican exiles was successful. However, the fact remained that Paoli had to continually argue the importance of this financial aid to the British ministers. The ‘Account of money expended for foreign secret services’, dated 6 April 1783, amounted the ‘allowance for Corsican expenses to do’ as £1500; the same amount as Paoli’s pension.⁵⁹⁰ It seemed that by 1783, the issue of Corsican expense had been resolved. What this episode revealed was the difficulty Paoli had in gaining anything from the British ministry concerning the Corsican cause. Paoli’s plan to gain British military aid to retake Corsica had failed. More importantly, Paoli needed the ministry more than they needed him. Paoli was not a slave of the ministry as claimed by the opposition: he could travel wherever and whenever he wanted. However, he was reliant on the pension and financial aid provided to the Corsican exiles by the British government. Ultimately, the British government remained Paoli’s greatest chance for restoration to Corsica.

What can be gathered from the period 1769-1772 concerning the Corsican cause in Britain? Any hope for British support for regaining Corsica remained remote, and thus so did Paoli’s aspirations for retaking the island. Government support for Paoli and the Corsicans can only be described as half-hearted at best. The difficulty Paoli found in gaining British financial support for the Corsican exiles in Britain, perfectly exemplifies the problems he faced in gaining any governmental assistance. The opposition had effectively disowned Paoli as their symbol of liberty. Therefore Paoli was obliged to seek support primarily from the ministry. Ironically, this situation only

588 ‘General Paoli to Lord Rochford, 6 March 1773’, *Calender of Home office Papers 1773-1775*, ed. Richard Arthur Roberts, (London, Her majesty’s stationary office, 1899), 27.

589 ‘General Paoli to Lord Rochford, 6 March 1773’, *Calender of Home office Papers 1773-1775*, 27.

590 ‘Account of money expended for foreign secret services by Lord Grantham’, *The Correspondence of King George The Third*, vol. VI, 344

further strengthened the ministry's hand concerning both Paoli and the Corsican exiles. Paoli as a symbol of liberty supported by the opposition was a far more dangerous proposition for the ministry than Paoli as an exile far from home. Paoli had little to bargain with when dealing with the ministry. All he could provide was the promise of Corsica's potential wealth and strategic importance. Paoli's attempt to persuade the British nation to undertake a major European campaign against France came at the wrong time. The focus of the ministry had shifted away from a Eurocentric foreign policy towards America: the problems in the thirteen colonies had gained far more importance within British foreign policy.

Paoli and the future of the Corsican cause in Britain 1770-1775

Since his arrival in England, Paoli's plan had been twofold. The first part had involved gathering as much support as possible. This had been hindered somewhat by the opposition's public disavowal of Paoli and the Corsican cause in Britain. The second part of Paoli's plan was the hope that war between Britain and France would breakout. By 1770, war between Britain and France looked unlikely. The British ministry attempted to avoid any European entanglements at all costs. War between Britain and France would not break out in the short term. However, this did not mean that a war would not occur in the future. Paoli still had hope of gathering enough public support for Corsica.

By 1772 the situation had changed. Boswell's Journal covered some of Paoli's activities during his exile in England. More importantly, he reflected the general British attitude towards Paoli. Boswell was an avid note taker, particularly of people and their attitudes, and as such provided insights into people's thoughts and opinions concerning Paoli. One such occasion was Samuel Johnson's meeting with Paoli on 31 March 1772. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was a famous writer and essayist, whom Boswell knew prior to his trip to Corsica in 1765. Boswell idolized Johnson. He later famously published his biography the *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791). Paoli, through Boswell, made a friendship with Johnson. After the meeting and dinner, Johnson went home with Boswell, where they drank tea. It was here Johnson commented that "General Paoli had lost somewhat of that grandeur in his air and manner which he had

when he came first to England”.⁵⁹¹ Boswell believed the observation to be just, and in fact was “easily accounted for”.⁵⁹² When Paoli first came to England, “he was just arrived from being at the head of a nation”; both in Corsica and Britain, “he was addressed in that high character”.⁵⁹³ However, “after having been near three years just in the style of a private gentleman, much of the majesty of his deportment must insensibly be lost”.⁵⁹⁴ Paoli was now only considered to be a private gentleman; the longer he stayed in exile, the more entrenched this persona of his became.

Paoli certainly had lost his hold on popular memory by 1772. The British public were extremely fickle; Paoli and the Corsican cause had simply been forgotten as more time had passed. Boswell also noted an intriguing episode, on 19 March 1772, when he attempted to find Paoli’s house in London on Albemarle Street. The ‘chairman’ (Boswell does not give his name) did not know who Paoli was, until his ‘companion’ described him as “the foreign gentleman”.⁵⁹⁵ Boswell noted that “so little is the great Paoli known by some”.⁵⁹⁶ Paoli’s loss upon the public memory was not only due to the loss of his ‘grandeur’. The opposition’s public criticism of Paoli in 1769, certainly had damaged his public persona for the following years. Boswell also noted that Paoli had invited him to lodge at his house for the night. Boswell refused, due to “my being lodged there might give the Grub-street writers an opportunity of throwing out low abuse, and saying that he (Paoli) was pensioned by British generosity and kept a Scotsman gratis in his house”.⁵⁹⁷ Boswell also noted in his Journal, dated 25 March 1775 of a dinner at the house of the bookseller Dilly. A certain ‘Davies’, a clergyman, “was finding fault with General Paoli as doing nothing but eat English beef”.⁵⁹⁸ Boswell responded, by claiming that Paoli was “a game cock, ready to fight whenever there is a main. In the mean time he must be fed- George the Third, feeder”.⁵⁹⁹ The longer Paoli remained in exile in Britain, the harder it would become to justify the

591 Boswell, *Boswell: For the Defence 1769-1774*, ed. Charles Ryshamp and Frederick Pottle, (London: Heinemann, 1960), 86.

592 Boswell, *Boswell: For the Defence*, 86.

593 Boswell, *Boswell: For the Defence*, 86.

594 Boswell, *Boswell: For the Defence*, 86.

595 Boswell, *Boswell: For the Defence*, 35.

596 Boswell, *Boswell: For the Defence*, 35.

597 Boswell, *Boswell: For the Defence*, 36.

598 Boswell, *Boswell: The Ominous Years 1774-1776*, ed. William Wimsatt Jr. and Frederick Pottle, (London: Heinemann, 1963), 96.

599 Boswell, *Boswell: The Ominous Years*, 96.

lavish pension provided to him. The longer the Corsican exiles lingered, the more it seemed to become a hopeless cause.

The newspapers from 1772-1775 contained several articles critical of Paoli's stay in England. This criticism particularly focused on Paoli's pension from the British government. The 2-5 April 1774 edition of the *Middlesex Journal* contained an article criticising Grafton, "that weak minister" for neglecting the Corsican and Mediterranean trade.⁶⁰⁰ The fall of Corsica to the French in 1769 was still a bitter pill for British writers to swallow even some five years after the actual events. Grafton "swot-led the nation with a pension to General Paoli for deserting the interest of his country".⁶⁰¹ The paper believed that the exiled Paoli was a poor reward for the relief efforts given to Corsica. Paoli after all "was neither a soldier nor a statesman".⁶⁰² The language used here to criticize Paoli, directly reflected that used by the opposition against Paoli in 1769. What should be remembered was that the *Middlesex Journal* was one of the main opposition papers. Any criticism of Paoli inevitably meant an attack upon the ministry. The paper claimed that Paoli was "happy to retire with whole bones, and to be paid for doing nothing".⁶⁰³

The criticism in the British newspapers concerning Paoli, was in contrast to the general sentiment of support for the Corsicans themselves. 1774 saw a major revolt in Corsica against French rule. Little still is known about this uprising; questions such as who started it and how it was organised still persist. The lack of information about the revolt added to the mystery of Corsica for Britons. The 4 July 1774 edition of the *Daily Advertiser* contained an extract of a letter from Corsica, dated 26 May. The letter claimed that the Corsicans were "assisted by those who followed General Paoli, and took refuge at Leghorn".⁶⁰⁴ It was unlikely Paoli was directly involved in fomenting the revolt. He did nevertheless have constant dispatches and updates from the island, as illustrated in Boswell's Journal entry, dated 2 April 1776. Boswell noted that Paoli communicated to him in confidence, "some important intelligence concerning Corsica

600 'London', *Middlesex Journal*, 2-5 April 1774; Issue 783.

601 *Middlesex Journal*, 2-5 April 1774.

602 *Middlesex Journal*, 2-5 April 1774.

603 *Middlesex Journal*, 2-5 April 1774.

604 'London', *Daily Advertiser*, 4 July 1774, Issue 13583.

and himself”.⁶⁰⁵ Paoli maintained constant correspondence with the Corsican exiles in Tuscany and elsewhere in Italy, who relayed to him news articles from the island. This was illustrated by Paoli’s letter to Luigi Ciavaldini, on October 2nd 1778. Luigi Ciavaldini fought for Paoli in Corsica, and later served as colonel and adjutant to Sir Gilbert Elliot, Viceroy of Corsica from 1794-1796. Paoli wanted Ciavaldini to say hello to “all good patriots”, and to thank a certain Mr Astoffi “for the news” from Corsica.⁶⁰⁶ In the future, Paoli informed Ciavaldini he would send his letters through either “the secretariat of the cav. Hamilton or agent of the Neapolitan consul in London”.⁶⁰⁷ Paoli was the lynch pin for all Corsican exiles and supporters. He was also still a symbol of liberty for those on the island.

The 4 July 1774 edition of the *Daily Advertiser* claimed that the rebellion had been formed by some ‘particular people’, but that their hopes for bringing over others to their cause had been “discovered before it could be put into execution”.⁶⁰⁸ The letter stated that mildness of government was best for a “wild and audacious set of people”.⁶⁰⁹ The French system was too harsh and tyrannical for the freedom loving Corsicans; what was needed was British constitutional government. The article concluded by asking how the Corsicans would react, “if supported by any power, and what is to be feared from them in case of a war”.⁶¹⁰ The Corsicans were still considered to be a warlike and dangerous people, potent in war: if Britain would support them, they would become a powerful asset.

The 6 August 1774 edition of the *Public Advertiser* followed on from this supportive sentiment. The writer of the article who called themselves Probus, described that the Pieve of Niolo remained unconquered. In vain oppressive taxes had been levied and threats of punishment made: they could not “intimidate these asserters of the liberty of their country”.⁶¹¹ The influence of religious leaders eventually led to the surrender of this Pieve. After the surrender, forty-two prisoners of suspected families fell victim to

605 Boswell, *Boswell: The Ominous Years*, 307.

606 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 314.

607 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 314.

608 *Daily Advertiser*, 4 July, 1774.

609 *Daily Advertiser*, 4 July, 1774.

610 *Daily Advertiser*, 4 July, 1774.

611 ‘To the Printer of the Public Advertiser’, *Public Advertiser*, 6 August 1774; Issue 13093.

“Gallic perfidy and revenge”.⁶¹² Eleven of them were subjected to cruel and unmerited torture of the rack, and left to expire in sight of their countrymen. This episode, which was repeated among a number of newspapers, was a description of French cruelty, rather than Corsican bravery. France was the main enemy of Britain. They were the antithesis of Britain: the French were tyrannical and oppressive in contrast to British liberty and freedom. Probus believed that if these acts of heroism from the Corsicans had happened during the time of the Roman Republic, “either they [Rome] would have sought their friendship and amity, or have conquered this isle to have associated them to the Roman Empire”.⁶¹³ The article concluded that all of Europe “saw this little nation bravely defending its liberties, and it still remains unpited [sic] and unsupported”.⁶¹⁴ The language used to describe the Corsicans in this newspaper was similar to that utilized in the time of the Corsican crisis in 1768-1769. In contrast to Paoli, the Corsicans were still portrayed to be ‘brave’ citizens continually fighting for their liberty. British newspapers still had a natural sympathy for the Corsicans themselves. The period 1770-1775 saw a clear separation in attitudes towards Paoli and towards the Corsicans themselves. For many Britons, there were those brave Corsicans on the island, and those lesser exiles in Britain, headed by Paoli.

The Corsican issue during the American Revolutionary war 1775-1783

The growing crisis between the American rebels and British government descended into war in 1775. Britain’s defeat at Saratoga in 1778 prompted both France and Spain to enter the war in 1778 and 1779 respectively. The entry of France into the war was what Paoli had been waiting for; with it would come the re-emergence of the Corsican issue in British foreign policy. However, there was no British attempt to take Corsica during the war. Why was this the case? In fact, Paoli during these years remained rather inactive. He was elected to the Royal Society on the 3 March 1774, and mostly spent time with the literary and artistic circle that revolved around Samuel Johnson. As seen from George III’s correspondence, Paoli from the years 1770-1773 had annual meetings with the King. There was no further mention of Paoli after this period. The Corsican issue had certainly become less popular and important by 1773. Even Paoli

⁶¹² *Public Advertiser*, 6 August 1774.

⁶¹³ *Public Advertiser*, 6 August 1774.

⁶¹⁴ *Public Advertiser*, 6 August 1774.

himself was considered to be less relevant; this feeling increased the longer he remained in exile in Britain.

Boswell's Journal recorded an interesting episode, his meeting with the king on 30 May 1781. The journal noted that the king was aware of Boswell's visit to Corsica, and had read his *Account of Corsica* (1768). Upon the subject of Corsica, Boswell told the king that Paoli was "always very sensible to your majesty's goodness to him. But though your majesty is pleased to make him very comfortable as a private gentleman, I, who have seen him in Corsica, am sensible that it is a sad change".⁶¹⁵ Two things strike me from this passage: the first is that Paoli was only considered to be a private gentleman, not leader of a nation; the second is that Boswell had accepted Paoli's exile in England. No longer was Boswell the firebrand, fighting for the Corsican cause; he merely accepted Paoli's exile to be a 'sad change'. The king believed Paoli was "a greater politician than a soldier", to which Boswell replied that "the French have been at great pains to deprecate him as a soldier"; although Boswell was informed that Paoli "had courage enough".⁶¹⁶ The King, and even Boswell, both doubted Paoli's abilities as a soldier. No longer was he a great Roman general, bravely leading his forces; instead he was just a philosopher. The French were not the only ones who had doubted Paoli's abilities as a soldier. Both the king and Boswell were certainly influenced by the opposition's questioning of Paoli's abilities and bravery as a general. The fact that George III doubted Paoli as a general, meant that he could not be trusted in any major military capacity. The king told Boswell that he did not mean Paoli to be deficient, "but that his forte was being a legislator- in short, putting law into a people who were lawless".⁶¹⁷ The king believed that Paoli was "a great deal better than the people among whom he was. They were wild".⁶¹⁸ The king believed that the Corsicans themselves were uncivilised savages in the same mould as the Scottish Highlanders. Only Paoli could put 'law' into the 'lawless' Corsicans. Paoli was the epitome of the Corsican cause in Britain. Any British attempt to regain Corsica from the French would need Paoli's support. Any questioning of his abilities and character could hinder any British

⁶¹⁵ Boswell, *Boswell: Laird of Auchinleck, 1778-1782*, ed. Joseph Reed and Frederick Pottle, (New York: McGraw-Hill book Company, 1977), 366.

⁶¹⁶ Boswell, *Boswell: Laird of Auchinleck*, 366.

⁶¹⁷ Boswell, *Boswell: Laird of Auchinleck*, 366.

⁶¹⁸ Boswell, *Boswell: Laird of Auchinleck*, 366.

venture into Corsica. What is interesting to note, was that Boswell and the king's discussions of Paoli all concerned his past actions in Corsica. There was no indication that Paoli would be able to return to Corsica in the future. The conversation between Boswell and the king took place in 1781, in the midst of the American Revolutionary War. There was no mention of the war, or its potential relation to Corsica. Why was this the case?

The primary reason why there was no British attempt upon Corsica during the American Revolutionary war, was due to strategic and military considerations. As previously noted, British governmental interest was firmly fixed upon America, which was seen as crucial for Britain's commercial system. Quashing the rebels was considered to be the primary objective. With the entry of France and Spain into the war, Britain was left firmly on the defensive, especially in the European theatre of war. In previous wars such as the War of Austrian Succession (1742-1748) and Seven Years War (1756-1763), Britain had always had a major continental power, such as Prussia or Austria, to tie down French forces in Europe. The American War was the first to see Britain face a coalition of enemies unsupported and alone. In fact this was mainly due to the disastrous foreign policy of the North ministry, which saw Britain alienate most of the major powers in Europe. Their system of peace and stability had totally failed. Both Spain and France were always planning to revenge their losses to Britain from the Seven Years War. With the focus upon operations in America, Europe became a secondary consideration. Minorca fell in 1781, and Gibraltar was under siege from 1779-1783. There was no possible chance for an offensive against Corsica. Britain's navy even suffered major naval defeats, most famously the Battle of the Chesapeake in 1781. They were far more reluctant to engage the new well equipped French fleets, especially in their own waters. There was even an invasion threat from both France and Spain during these years. This situation made it impossible for any forays into the Mediterranean, especially with the loss of Minorca.

In an interesting side-note to the war, some Corsican volunteers did fight for Britain during the war in Europe. Some were involved in the defence and evacuation of Minorca in 1781. These volunteers were then sent to assist the British during the Great

siege of Gibraltar. John Drinkwater (1762-1844), was a British army officer at Gibraltar. He kept a journal, which was published as *A History of the late siege of Gibraltar* (1786). On 25 July, 1782, Drinkwater noted that two ships were able to break through the blockade into Gibraltar. On these ships, was Signor Leonetti, nephew to Pascal Paoli, “the celebrated Corsican chief”.⁶¹⁹ Paoli was still well known enough to be considered a ‘celebrated’ chief. Leonetti was accompanied by two officers, a chaplain, and sixty eight Corsican volunteers, “to offer their services to the governor” George Augustus Eliott (1717-1790).⁶²⁰ Despite the small numbers, Drinkwater still merited mentioning them in his published work. The volunteers attempted to show that Corsica and Britain could still maintain close connections. It was rather extraordinary that so many volunteered to fight for a nation who did so little to aid Corsica when invaded by the French. One of the officers was Philip Masseria, who later served as Paoli’s emissary to Paris, during the 1790s. Drinkwater noted that the Corsican volunteers were formed into an independent corps, with Leonetti appointed captain commandant. The “governor quartered them on windmill-hill, and committed that post to their charge”, where they took an active part in the defence.⁶²¹ Despite their small numbers, the Corsican volunteers provided an important symbolic contribution, which showed that Corsica and Britain could maintain close relations. After the war, Masseria brought the company over to England, eventually meeting Paoli in London. Boswell noted Masseria’s arrival in England, in his Journal. On the 24 March 1783, Boswell wrote that Masseria, and Pietro Colle, who had both served during the war, “were with the General every day at dinner”.⁶²² Paoli still maintained followers in both England and Italy, through his pension from the British government. However, these were still few in number, and ultimately could not act without British governmental support.

Conclusion: Paoli’s failed plans?

Paoli arrived in Britain in September 1769 on the crest of a wave of popularity. By the 1780s, the future of the Corsican cause in Britain looked bleak. How did this situation

619 John Drinkwater, *A History of the late Siege of Gibraltar*, 2nd ed. (London, Printed by T. Spilsbury, 1786), 249.

620 Drinkwater, *A History of the late Siege of Gibraltar*, 249.

621 Drinkwater, *A History of the late Siege of Gibraltar*, 251.

622 Boswell, *Boswell: The Applause of the Jury 1782-1785*, ed. Irmus Lustig and Frederick Pottle, (New York: McGraw-Hill book company, 1981), 84.

come about? Paoli had a clear plan when he arrived in Britain: he wanted to gather as much support as possible for the Corsican cause, and hoped for a war to break out between Britain and France. Problems however began to arise with this plan. Paoli's dealing with the ministry was seen by the opposition to be a betrayal of the cause of liberty. Samuel Vaughan was the first major opposition member to openly criticise Paoli. Vaughan could not understand why Paoli, an avid supporter of liberty, would seek help from a corrupt and weak ministry. Paoli attempted to play a political game whilst in England. He originally attempted to remain a political neutral, but Paoli understood that only the ministry's support would enable him to regain Corsica from the French. After the fallout with Samuel Vaughan, Paoli began to openly distance himself from the opposition. This in turn caused them to more forcefully criticize his conduct. Paoli's opportune absence from his proposed meetings with McCauley and Beckford gave further indication to the opposition of Paoli's support for the ministry. He failed to understand the domestic politics of Britain: as he indicated to Count Rivarola, "I do not know how to bring myself". In the end, this led to the opposition abandoning the Corsican cause entirely. Paoli's reputation was damaged by the attacks from the opposition in 1769-1770, and he therefore became far more reliant upon British ministerial support.

The period 1769-1772 was decisive for shaping the Corsican cause in Britain. The opposition claimed that Paoli had become a 'slave' of the ministry. This was certainly true when it came to gaining support for the Corsican cause: he was entirely in their power and debt. No action regarding Corsica could be taken without their support. Paoli sent far fewer letters to his fellow Corsican patriots after 1770. Why was this the case? Paoli wrote in a later letter to Rivarola that "I can not write at all, because, seeing folk, the letters are opened. Oh God, how many spies".⁶²³ Paoli was fearful of French spies; any leaked information could jeopardise the safety of those Corsicans in exile. Paoli's language also suggested a distrust of the channels through which the letters were sent. Paoli could not fully trust the British government; they certainly were opening his letters to check their content. Paoli's actions and letters were monitored by the British government. Perhaps he *had* become the 'slave' of the ministry as

⁶²³ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 184.

prophesied by opposition writers. His only hope lay with a breakout of war between Britain and France. This did not occur in the short term due to the fall of Choiseul and the great reluctance of the British ministry to engage in a major European war. Since 1763, the British ministry had abandoned the Eurocentric policy of their predecessors; their primary focus was on America and the Empire outside of Europe. Any major European war was seen to be too costly, especially following the debts Britain had gathered from the Seven Years War. Paoli was rather naive to believe that the same British ministry that had done nothing to aid Corsica during the French invasion in 1768-1769, would come to aid him during the 1770s. Paoli's reputation was damaged by the opposition to the extent that both ministry and king doubted his abilities. The king in particular doubted Paoli's abilities as a general. The Corsicans themselves were viewed as 'savages' and uncivilised: only Paoli could legislate and rule these lawless Corsicans. Any future British venture into Corsica needed Paoli involved to be successful. Paoli was the epitome of the Corsican cause within Britain; any weakness shown on his part hindered the cause.

The period 1772-1775 was a transition stage for Paoli and the Corsican cause in Britain. The longer Paoli and the Corsicans remained in exile in Britain, the more their cause became forgotten. Corsica did not remain at the forefront of news for long. Despite the continued presence of articles and pamphlets concerning Corsica during these years, there were markedly fewer than during the late 1760s. Paoli was seen to be a private gentleman and citizen; the longer his exile persisted, the lesser his importance to European politics became. Those articles that mentioned Paoli and the Corsicans, spoke of their past deeds and former greatness. The language talked of a defeated cause; not one where Paoli and the Corsicans could regain Corsica from the French. Paoli seemed to represent a bygone age; by the 1780s he was a hero from some fifteen years before. Lack of real action had ultimately hindered the Corsican cause in Britain. Paoli's plan to keep Corsica in the British public eye had failed. The American Revolutionary War highlighted how far down Corsica was on the British governmental agenda. The war fought in America became the focus for military operations. The war in Europe was only a secondary theatre; Britain in this front was firmly on the defensive. Military and strategic considerations ultimately meant that Corsica would

not be discussed during this war. The war also highlighted the powerlessness of Paoli in Britain; only the British government could decide whether Corsica would become a strategic target. Paoli had no influence on British governmental affairs. This was in part due to the fact that he was both a foreigner and a Catholic. Due to his long exile, he was only seen to be a private gentleman; not a King or leader. Paoli had lost his regal authority and aura of character.

Therefore, the period from 1769-1783 can only be considered a failure for the Corsican cause in Britain. The Corsican cause was constantly attempting to survive and preserve its relevance for Britain. Perhaps what should really be asked is whether the British government ever really contemplated taking back Corsica after the French conquest in 1769? Any invasion would be difficult, and would cost much in manpower and money in return for an underdeveloped island. The American Revolutionary War did however produce a number of important changes in British foreign policy. Now that America was independent, she was no longer the primary focus of Britain's foreign policy. Also, the loss of Minorca to Spain during the war meant that Britain had no base in the Mediterranean, barring Gibraltar. With the increased strength and power of the French navy, a base in the Mediterranean became far more relevant within British foreign policy, especially with the main French naval base located at Toulon (See Appendix 1 for proximity of Toulon to Corsica). Britain did begin to take an active role again in Europe during the 1780s; their role in restoring the Stadtholder to Holland in 1787, along with Prussia, was considered to mark their revival within European affairs. Ironically, Paoli and the Corsicans greatest chance for restoration came not from Britain, but France. The French Revolution in 1789 would change political and strategic considerations in Europe. It was always extremely unlikely Britain would have risked any venture into Corsica. The British government never considered the advantages to be gained from the island great enough to risk an invasion. A British invasion of the island did indeed occur in 1794, during the French revolutionary wars. The fact that a British invasion of the island occurred at all was the most surprising aspect of this episode. A set of unique circumstances needed to be in place in order for any British intervention to occur. It was only Paoli's presence and support on the island, which had prompted the British to act. Paoli was always vital to any British

venture into Corsica. He had gained political relevance once again with his restoration to the island in 1790. Perhaps the most important event to occur between 1769-1789, was Paoli's conversion as a British agent. Paoli's long exile in Britain had made him admire everything about the English nation. It was his initiative that led the British to invade the island in 1794. This led to one of the most remarkable conquests in British imperial history: the short lived Anglo-Corsican Kingdom (1794-1796), which will be the subject of the final chapter.

The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom 1794-1796: An 'Experiment' in British constitutional government

On 26 December 1795 Sir Gilbert Elliot (1751-1814), Viceroy of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom (1794-1796), wrote a dispatch to the Home Secretary William Cavendish-Bentinck, the Duke of Portland (1738-1809). In the dispatch, Elliot claimed that he could 'justify' for the first time "the experiment that has been made"; English government was 'firmly' established in Corsica.⁶²⁴ The 'experiment' Elliot referred to was the recently formed Anglo-Corsican Kingdom, a unique constitutional form of government unprecedented in the history of the British Empire. Perhaps what was more strange was the fact that Britain intervened in Corsica at all. As noted in the previous chapter, Pasquale Paoli (1725-1807) leader of the independent Corsican Republic, had sought exile in Britain following the French conquest of Corsica in 1769. Paoli spent the next twenty years in Britain, languishing on the rather generous pension provided for him by the British government. For Paoli and the small number of Corsican exiles in Britain, any possibility for their return to Corsica seemed extremely remote. The British government was simply unwilling to intervene for a relatively rudimentary island. Britain was a commercial empire; their primary objective was to secure lucrative trade links. Corsica was not worth the expense of a war with France: a set of unique circumstances needed to be in place in order for any British intervention in Corsica to happen.

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 would dramatically change the geo-strategic considerations of the major powers in Europe. It also brought about fundamental changes for Paoli and the Corsican exiles. Paoli was invited back to Corsica by the new French National Assembly in 1790. The new French revolutionary government espoused the three ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. Paoli was seen to encapsulate these new ideals of the French revolution. The French invasion of Corsica in 1768 was perceived by the French revolutionaries to have been a battle between liberty and tyranny. Paoli and his Corsicans were seen to be on the side of liberty, battling against the forces of the tyrannical French monarchy. Paoli was

⁶²⁴ FO 20/9 Elliot to the Duke of Portland, 26 December 1795.

subsequently elected president of the new department of Corsica, returning to Corsica in July 1790. Paoli however remained a fervent supporter of the British constitutional monarchy, this support stemming from his twenty years of exile in England. Paoli's loyalty to the new French government would be put to the test in 1793, when France declared war on Britain. For Paoli, the French revolution had fundamentally changed by 1793: the king Louis XVI (1754-1793) had been executed in January 1793, and the new Committee of Public safety had begun a system of 'terror', aimed at eliminating the internal 'enemies' of the Republic. Paoli subsequently 'invited' the British to intervene in Corsica. Following the British expulsion from Toulon in December 1793, the British fleet under Admiral Samuel Hood (1724-1816) needed another naval base in the Mediterranean. Paoli's invitation prompted the British to establish the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom in 1794. The union was spoken of in 'universal' terms, with Paoli noting that the protection of Great Britain promised for Corsica "prosperity and power, uninterrupted for ages".⁶²⁵ However, the Kingdom would only last for two years, with the evacuation of the island completed by the 21 October 1796.

Why did the Anglo-Kingdom fail? This will be one of the fundamental questions I will attempt to answer in this final chapter. I will argue that the establishment of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was the result of continued British interest in Corsica throughout the eighteenth century. Britain and Corsica were both seen as islands of liberty with a shared kinship. It was this idea that directly influenced the formation of the unique style of constitutional government adopted for Corsica in 1794. The same language and arguments that had been used to try to convince the British government to intervene in Corsica in 1768, were used again in 1794. Both the Corsican Crisis in 1768-1769 and Anglo-Corsican Kingdom 1794-1796 can be linked by one principal actor: Pasquale Paoli. Ironically, the arguments used to prompt British intervention in Corsica would sow the seeds of doubt and cause Britain's eventual disillusionment with the Anglo-Corsican 'experiment'. The promise of an island ripe for development was an illusion. It was clear that by the end of 1796 that the 'experiment' had failed and that both Corsica and Britain had rejected any notion of union. How did the union fail so spectacularly within two years? This chapter will be divided into three major

⁶²⁵ *The Annual Register, or, a view of the History, Politics and Literature for the Year 1794*, Mocavo UK, Web. 02 October 2014, 99.

sections. The first will cover the events and circumstances that led to the formation of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. The second section will study the constitution and politics of the island. The final section will study the events which led to the eventual fall of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. Ultimately the fall of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was initiated by a Corsican more famous than Paoli himself: Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821).

Historians on the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom

Before delving into the formation of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom, I will briefly discuss the historiographical debates concerning Britain's acquisition of Corsica in 1794. One of the first major works concerning the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was Robert Palmer's article *The Kingdom of Corsica and the science of history* (1961). In it, Palmer argues that the formation of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was directly linked to the French Revolutionary Wars (1792-1801). Both Britain and France "took advantage of discontents within enemy states".⁶²⁶ With the case of Corsica, Britain used Paoli and his party to gain a foothold on the island. Palmer followed this article with the publication of the second volume of his book *The Age of the democratic revolution* (1964). Within the book, Palmer placed the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom within the framework of counter-revolutionary governments, arguing that the Anglo-Corsican government represented an alternative model to the French revolution.⁶²⁷ The model of Corsica was meant to 'resemble' England. The purpose of the new regime was to protect 'liberty and religion' against the 'anarchy' of the French.⁶²⁸ Palmer merely categorizes the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom as another version of Counter-revolution. He compared the British actions in Corsica to the brief occupation of Italy by Austrian and Russian forces in 1799. Palmer's argument misinterprets the context and circumstances surrounding the formation of the Anglo-Corsican kingdom. The constitution was created uniquely for Corsica, and in fact contained many differences from the British version. The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was not a counter-revolutionary model at all. Britain attempted to provide its own alternative

626 Robert Palmer, "The Kingdom of Corsica and the science of history", *American Philosophical society*, vol.105, no. 4, (1961), 354-360, 355.

627 Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution, Part 2*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 286

628 Palmer, *Democratic Revolution, part 2*, 285

constitutional model to the French Revolution. For the Corsicans, it was a choice between French Revolutionary or British constitutional government.

Elisa Carrillo followed on from Palmer's original article concerning Corsica. In her article *The Corsican Kingdom of George III* (1962), Carillo expresses her belief that the British occupation of Corsica was "one of the most fascinating episodes of the wars of the French revolution".⁶²⁹ Carillo agrees with Palmer that British Corsica represented "an attempt to roll back the tide of Jacobinism in the Mediterranean area", by attempting to 'implant' in Southern European soil, features of the British constitutional system.⁶³⁰ Carillo goes into far more depth and detail than Palmer concerning Corsica, using a variety of archival sources to support her arguments. She believes that "strategic considerations rather than a desire to universalize the Anglo-Saxon way of life provided the initial impetus for Britain's occupation of Corsica".⁶³¹ Ultimately "the kingdom hurt the very cause it was intending to serve- the war against revolutionary France- for it aroused the hostility of Spain" which caused the eventual evacuation of the island.⁶³² Spain was a former ally of Britain in the war against France. Spain would eventually turn against Britain, declaring war in October 1796. Spain's role in causing the British evacuation of Corsica will be discussed at length in the final section of this chapter.

Desmond Gregory agrees with Carillo that strategic considerations ultimately caused both the formation and eventual fall of the Corsican Kingdom. Gregory's book *The Ungovernable Rock* (1985) provides the most comprehensive study of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom from a British perspective. It argues that the occupation of Corsica "made considerable sense as an integral part of allied strategy in a war against revolutionary France", and in relation to "British strategy in the Mediterranean over more than a century".⁶³³ Gregory was the first major historian to link the establishment

629 Elisa Carillo, "The Corsican Kingdom of George III", *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 34, no. 3 (September 1962), 254-274, 254.

630 Carillo, "Corsican Kingdom", 254.

631 Carillo, "Corsican Kingdom", 254.

632 Carillo, "Corsican Kingdom", 274.

633 Desmond Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock: A History of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom, and its role in Britain's Mediterranean Strategy during the Revolutionary War (1793-1797)*, (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1985), 11.

of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom to previous interests Britain had maintained in the Mediterranean during the eighteenth century. Gregory merely views British interest in Corsica through the spectrum of strategic considerations, however. He believes that Britain's "military and naval requirements could well have been satisfied by the leasing of bases".⁶³⁴ This argument overlooks the previous political notions Britain had concerning Corsica. I aim to argue that the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom cannot be understood without understanding the previous relations between Britain and Corsica during the eighteenth century. The strange and unique Anglo-Corsican constitution can only be understood by knowing the previous notions and ideals Britain had concerning Corsica. Both Britain and Corsica were sister isles of liberty: Corsica was merely viewed as a less developed version of Britain. Corsica could be developed through British commerce and industry. If British interest in Corsica had merely been military/strategic, only the main naval and military bases would have been seized, as with Gibraltar and Minorca.

Corsica was in fact one of the largest European states to be ruled by Britain during this period. In contrast, Hanover was in personal union with Britain, where in theory the two states "retain their independence under a common ruler".⁶³⁵ Nick Harding in his book *Hanover and the British Empire 1700-1837* (2007) argues that the relationship between Hanover and Britain extended further than dynastic union. However, Harding acknowledges that there was a "high degree of mutual independence between Hanover and Britain".⁶³⁶ Hanover and Britain "retained separate laws, governments, churches, and representative assemblies throughout the dynastic union"; although there were certain instances of legal and institutional convergence.⁶³⁷ The other British territories in Europe, Gibraltar and Minorca, were merely military bases. The Anglo-Corsican kingdom provides a unique insight into how the British Empire would rule any territories captured in Europe during the eighteenth century. British conquests in Europe during this period were rare, and were usually small bases or islands. Corsica was a larger island with a moderately sized native catholic population. Perhaps the

⁶³⁴ Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock*, 11.

⁶³⁵ Nick Harding, *Hanover and the British Empire 1700-1837*, vol. 4, (Woodbridge: The Bodley Press, 2007), 7.

⁶³⁶ Harding, *Hanover and the British Empire*, 8.

⁶³⁷ Harding, *Hanover and the British Empire*, 8.

only comparison of note was Ireland; however the history and circumstances of the two islands were completely different. As will be illustrated, Britain treated European conquests far differently from those outside of Europe. What all the major historians do agree on is the fundamental rejection of any notion of a British-Corsican union after 1796. Was this really due to the idea that Corsica was an ‘ungovernable rock’ as described by Gregory in the title of his book? Why did Corsica look to France for union rather than Britain after 1796?

French Revolution 1789-1792: The return of Paoli to Corsica

As discussed at length in the previous chapter, Paoli had been in exile in England since 1769. The British government had made no attempt to aid Paoli in recapturing Corsica from the French. Paoli’s greatest chance of restoration came in 1789, with the unexpected events surrounding the French Revolution. The Revolution saw a complete change of French government and identity. The declaration of the Rights of Man, proclaimed that all “men are born and remain free and equal in rights”.⁶³⁸ These rights were defined as “liberty, property, personal safety and resistance to oppression”.⁶³⁹ The ideals of the French revolutionaries appeared to be similar to those professed by Paoli some twenty years earlier. Paoli was kept informed of these events. He had sent his fellow Corsican Philip Masseria to Corsica to ascertain the intentions of the Corsicans themselves. Masseria was previously the Captain of a detachment of Corsicans who served in Gibraltar during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). Masseria would serve both Paoli and the British government as an agent in Corsica and elsewhere. He would later serve as Paoli’s eyes and ears in London, when the General was in Corsica. Masseria reported to Paoli on the 28 September 1789 that the inhabitants had “taken the government of the island upon themselves”.⁶⁴⁰ One of the Corsican deputies, Bartolomeo Arena, was in London, “to know the intentions of General Paoli”.⁶⁴¹ Arena asserted that if the Corsicans had “but a proper supply of arms, their own people were sufficient to drive all the French out of the island”.⁶⁴² At this point in time, Paoli and his network of Corsican exiles were still attempting to

638 François Furet, *The French Revolution*, tr. Stephen Hardman, (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1970), 89.

639 Furet, *The French Revolution*, 89.

640 FO 95/4/6, Intelligence relative to Corsica, from Captain Masseria, 28 September 1789.

641 FO 95/4/6, Intelligence from Masseria, 28 September 1789.

642 FO 95/4/6, Intelligence from Masseria, 28 September 1789.

secure a free and independent Corsica. Paoli thus took advantage of the relative chaos and uncertainty that surrounded the Revolution.

On Corsica itself, Masseria informed Paoli that Bastia (the capital) had deposed the chief magistrate of the island and 13 other persons who were considered to be “attached to the late despotic measures” had been banished.⁶⁴³ Paoli and Masseria however were keeping their options open. Masseria informed Paoli that he soon meant to go to Versailles himself, where he was sure of being “well reviewed by some in the assembly who are great enthusiasts in the Corsican cause”.⁶⁴⁴ The French revolutionaries greatly admired Paoli’s fight against the French despotic regime some twenty years prior. The revolutionaries and Paoli had both struggled against the same despotic French government for the cause of liberty: the Corsican cause had become identified with the French revolutionary ethos. This was a very important, if somewhat unrecognised moment. There was a clear separation between the former French despotic government which had conquered Corsica, and the new French revolutionary regime. Paoli’s general anti-French bias would be replaced by a general reversion against any kind of despotism. The French revolutionary ideals could be identified with Paoli’s notions of liberty. Masseria informed Paoli that he had a passport from the national assembly, and would soon go back to Corsica. Masseria planned to “unite the inhabitants, and advise them to recall General de Paoli, when I think it is the proper time”.⁶⁴⁵ He would act in the “same spirit that animates the French at this moment”.⁶⁴⁶ The fight for Corsica’s independence was seen to be similar to the French revolutionary movement, and thus Paoli and the Corsican exiles were willing to work with the French revolutionary government.

Pasquale Paoli was invited by the national assembly to return to Corsica in early 1790. Paoli left England in late March 1790. On his way back to Corsica, Paoli visited Paris in April 1790. The April 27th edition of the *Whitehall Evening Post* contained Paoli’s address made to the national assembly on the 24 April 1790. Paoli proclaimed “the

643 FO 95/4/6, Intelligence from Masseria, 28 September 1789.

644 FO 95/4/6, Intelligence from Masseria, 28 September 1789.

645 FO 95/4/6, Intelligence from Masseria, 28 September 1789.

646 FO 95/4/6, Intelligence from Masseria, 28 September 1789.

present is the happiest day of my life”.⁶⁴⁷ He thanked the members of the National Assembly for restoring “the first of virtues” and the Corsicans liberties.⁶⁴⁸ After spending several months in Paris, Paoli arrived in Corsica on 17 July 1790, “to the great joy of the Corsicans”.⁶⁴⁹ A number of Corsicans had been sent to escort Paoli to Corsica, including a young Napoleon Bonaparte. How far were Paoli’s sentiments concerning France genuine? There were immediately questions raised over Paoli’s loyalty to the new French regime. The 19-21 August *London Chronicle* noted that Antoine Christophe Saliceti (1757-1809), one of the Corsican deputies in the National Assembly, complained that “the enemies of the public had circulated an accusation against General Paoli, of having influenced the Corsicans to put themselves under the protection of Great Britain”.⁶⁵⁰ Saliceti offered to prove the Corsican people were ‘satisfied’ of being united to the French Empire. The 6 November Edition of the *Argus* contained the proceedings in the National Assembly dated from 28 October 1790. Matteo Buttafoco (1731-1806) had made an ‘aristocratic complaint’ against Paoli, claiming that he had “maliciously excited in Corsica” opposition against the French regime.⁶⁵¹ Buttafoco was a Corsican aristocrat, who had previously served Paoli during the 1760s. In 1764 he had proposed to Rousseau to write a constitution for an independent Corsica, but joined the French army during the invasion of Corsica in 1768. In a later letter Paoli sent to Masseria dated 24 October 1793, Paoli noted in the margin that Buttafoco had “betrayed his country and benefactor”. Therefore Paoli had no regard “for a vagabond”.⁶⁵² There was a clear dislike between the two men. Buttafoco’s complaint was rejected by the other members of the Assembly. Some of these Corsican deputies in the National Assembly would cause problems for Paoli in the future. Even Saliceti would turn against Paoli in 1793 when the truth was known; Paoli was secretly a supporter of Britain.

Paoli was a converted British agent and great admirer of the British constitutional system. This was most evident in the speech Paoli gave to the Corsican assembly on 9 September 1790. Paoli’s long time friend and admirer James Boswell (1740-1795) had

⁶⁴⁷ *Whitehall Evening Post*, 27-29 1790; Issue 6480.

⁶⁴⁸ *Whitehall Evening Post*, 27-29 April 1790.

⁶⁴⁹ *English Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*, 14 August 1790; Issue 1701.

⁶⁵⁰ *London Chronicle*, 19-21 August, 1790; Issue 5305.

⁶⁵¹ *Argus*, 6 November, 1790; Issue 520.

⁶⁵² FO 20/22 Supplementary Papers 1783-1798, Paoli to Masseria 24 October 1793.

a copy of the speech sent from Paoli. Boswell subsequently translated and published the speech in the December 1790 edition of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Paoli noted that throughout the ages, his "countrymen have been obliged to take up arms".⁶⁵³ Paoli wanted his listeners to recollect the Corsican Republic, which he had "almost entirely delivered from its external and internal enemies".⁶⁵⁴ Corsica was now united with the French Empire, and subsequently a "sharer in its glory". Corsica became a department of France in March 1790, and had an equal status in theory to all the other departments. Paoli was careful to praise the wonderful "advantages" the French Revolution had provided for Corsica.⁶⁵⁵ However, he never wavered in his "profound gratitude" to that "powerful and generous nation" from which he had just left after twenty years of exile.⁶⁵⁶ Paoli considered Britain to be a "second native country, after being deprived of my own".⁶⁵⁷ Paoli's praise of Britain went beyond merely thanking that nation for providing him asylum during his twenty years of exile. Britain's strength was derived from its "august monarch, who possess every virtue, and who is truly worthy of the homage of a free and generous people".⁶⁵⁸ Paoli acknowledged that his sentiments concerning Britain will give "the smallest uneasiness to our generous French brethren".⁶⁵⁹

Paoli believed that there were several fundamental similarities between the British and new French political systems. Most importantly, both were now constitutional monarchies, where the power of the monarch was constrained by legislation and statutes. Paoli noted the gracious reception he had received from the French monarch Louis XVI (1754-1793) in Paris. Louis was pleased to give "the flattering commission which he instructed to me to endeavour to re-establish tranquillity among the people of this island".⁶⁶⁰ Paoli was clearly an ardent supporter of the French King, and of monarchy in general. This was due to his twenty years of exile in Britain, where he experienced the 'generosity' provided by King George III (1738-1820). Paoli indeed

653 Pasquale Paoli, "Letter, Boswell, James", *The Gentleman's Magazine: and Historical Chronicle*; December 1790, vol. 60, no. 6, 1174-1176, 1174.

654 Paoli, "Letter, Boswell", *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1174.

655 Paoli, "Letter, Boswell", *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1175.

656 Paoli, "Letter, Boswell", *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1176.

657 Paoli, "Letter, Boswell", *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1176.

658 Paoli, "Letter, Boswell", *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1176.

659 Paoli, "Letter, Boswell", *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1176.

660 Paoli, "Letter, Boswell", *Gentleman's magazine*, 1176.

knew George III relatively well, having had a number of meetings with him. Paoli's twenty years of exile had slowly transformed the previously zealous Republican Corsican patriot into an avid defender of Constitutional monarchy. France had recently been transformed into a constitutional monarchy, similar to Britain. Paoli's support for Britain and monarchy in general were not universally known. Paoli remained indebted to the national Assembly for his return to Corsica. His ideas concerning Britain could be placed aside for the time so long as the status-quo remained. His loyalties to the French Republic would be put into question when circumstances changed.

War between Britain and France 1793- Corsica a strategic target?

Two important events would occur in early 1793 that would challenge Paoli's loyalties to the new French Republic. The first saw Louis XVI executed on 21 January 1793. During 1792, France declared war on Austria, and found themselves at war with a number of European powers. France was declared a Republic on the 22 September 1792, two days after the French victory over Prussia at Valmy. The King was eventually put on trial in January 1793 and found guilty of crimes against the Republic. Paoli was of the opinion that the execution of the king "endangers Frances civil war".⁶⁶¹ Paoli acknowledged that he, like his friend the Abbot Andrei, always supported "the cause of the king". The Abbot Andrei was a representative of Corsica in the National Assembly of France. For Paoli, Louis' execution was certainly not needed, especially since France was "surrounded by fierce enemies".⁶⁶² For Paoli, the second major event to occur in 1793 was the French declaration of war on Britain and the United Provinces on the 1 February. Spain was also soon at war with France in March. The possibility of British intervention in Corsica became more of a possibility after the declaration of war. As seen in the last chapter, Britain had been unable, or unwilling, to intervene in Corsica during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783), in which Britain had faced both Spain and France in the European theatre, where she had been firmly on the defensive: the focus of Britain's attention had been firmly on America. With the outbreak of war with France in 1793, circumstances were very different. Britain found themselves as part of coalition of European powers facing

661 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, ed. Niccolo Tommaseo, (Florence: Gio Pietro Vieusseux, 1846), 375.

662 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 375.

an emergent French Republic. The British fleet was therefore able to freely enter Mediterranean waters with Spain as an ally.

Even before 1793, Corsica was still within British governmental interests, as was evidenced by the letters of intelligence received by the British Foreign Office from Philip Masseria, who worked as an agent and spy for both Paoli and the British government. As early as the 5 September 1789, Masseria noted that he would attempt to prove that the both the Corsicans and British were still willing to form an alliance with each other.⁶⁶³ In another letter sent to the foreign office on the 30 September 1790, Masseria claimed that the Corsicans still had “an enthusiasm of everything that is English”.⁶⁶⁴ Masseria claimed that the Corsicans still secretly supported Britain. This stemmed back from the British moral and material support sent to the Corsicans during the French invasion in 1768-1769. The Corsicans would soon have to make a choice; a future with Britain or France. Masseria sent another ‘secret’ letter on the 30 October 1790. Contact had been made through Florence via a certain Mr Harvey. John Harvey (1757-1796) was Britain’s minister to Tuscany from 1787-1794. Harvey was the avenue through which Masseria sent his letters to England. Within this letter, Masseria named Ajaccio as “the most eligible place in Corsica for the English, as having a very gracious and good harbour, a fine citadel regularly built and a large, and rich country around it”.⁶⁶⁵ Masseria was detailing for the British ministry the possibility of seizing Ajaccio as a fortified port, similar to the role played by Port Mahon in Minorca before 1783. Masseria would leave it to the ‘minister’ to consider the proposition. The ‘minister’ in question was most likely Francis Osborne, Duke of Leeds, who served as foreign secretary from 1783-1791.

What was the intention of Britain during this episode? At this point in time, the French Revolution was only in its early stages, and Britain and France were not even at war. Perhaps the British ministry had hoped to take advantage of the apparent instability caused by the French Revolution: Britain was contemplating a potential war that could breakout between themselves and an unstable French government. Whatever the case,

663 FO 95/4/6, From Captain Masseria, 5 November 1789.

664 FO 20/22, From Captain Masseria, 30 September 1790.

665 FO 20/22, From Captain Masseria, 30 October 1790 (Secret).

British governmental interest in Corsica had not diminished, especially with the Anglophile Paoli now on Corsica. Masseria was clearly attempting to revive British interest in Corsica, and was most likely working for Paoli. It is unlikely that Paoli would not have known about Masseria's correspondence with Britain, for he probably orchestrated this correspondence: using Masseria as contact would deflect any suspicions the French authorities had concerning Paoli's own intentions. What is clear is that British interest in Corsica had been reignited following the French Revolution in 1789, with prompting by the Anglophile Paoli. Even at this early juncture of the French Revolution, Paoli was attempting to draw Britain to Corsica. At this point in time, Britain's interest was merely contained to acquiring Ajaccio as a naval base. The British ministry did not act upon this apparent support of Britain amongst the Corsicans in 1790. Francis Osborne was considered to be an unreliable foreign minister, incapable of aggressive policy. However the seed of thought had been laid: Corsica had re-entered the sphere of British imperial interest.

In a later letter sent on the 16 August 1793, Masseria informed the British Foreign Office that the French had been watching him: they had intercepted his letters to the British and therefore no letters had been sent since 1790. By the time Masseria wrote this letter, the situation had changed. Paoli and his supporters had been declared rebels by the French government; therefore Britain was "free in honour and convenience" to aid the Corsicans. There had always been question marks raised concerning Paoli's loyalty to the French National Assembly. The situation came to a head during the proposed French invasion of Sardinia from Corsica in January 1793. The expedition, of which Napoleon was a part, was a complete failure. There were rumours of treachery, as the Sardinians had been well informed of the intended invasion. Paoli was suspected to have played a part in the failure of the expedition. Ferdinand Gregorovius recorded a conversation in his book *Wanderings in Corsica Vol II* (1855) between Paoli and his friend Pier Paulo Colonna di Cesari Roccas, who had commanded the failed expedition. Paoli reminded Cersari that "Sardinia is the natural ally of our island".⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁶ Ferdinand Gregorovius, *Wanderings in Corsica: Its History and its Heroes, vol. II*, tr. Alexander Muir, (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and CO, 1855), 152.

Whatever the truth of the matter, by January 1793 the National Assembly in Paris distrusted Paoli. Two French commissioners were soon sent to Corsica: Paoli was well aware of their true intentions. In a letter sent to his good friend, and fellow Corsican patriot Gain Francesco Galeazzi, Paoli noted that the commissioners design was “to persuade our department of the bad affection to France, and this through the work of my influence”.⁶⁶⁷ Galeazzi was president of General Council of the department (later a member of parliament of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom) and one of Paoli’s main correspondents and confidants during his time in Corsica. In the letter to Galeazzi, Paoli expressed that he still loved “the connection with France, because, for the social pact, with it we have shared everything; and every advantage and every honour like all other individuals of the Republic, we have the right to participate”.⁶⁶⁸ Paoli believed that the arrival of the two French commissioners had placed the ‘department’ of Corsica into “insurrection, and exposed [it] to the horrors of a civil war”.⁶⁶⁹ Paoli was denounced by the Republican party of nearby Toulon, and was summoned to the bar of the Convention in April 1793. Paoli in his letter to Galeazzi, noted that Joseph Bonaparte, elder brother to Napoleon, was “the editor of the Toulon club representation against me and Pozzo di Borgo”.⁶⁷⁰ Paoli refused to comply with the summons to Paris, and instead summoned the deputies from all the cities and communes of Corsica. These met in May, and sustained Paoli in opposition; revolt soon spread throughout the island. The commissioners with the aid of some Corsican republicans attempted to set up a rival government at Ajaccio. The French Revolution had fostered a strong, if small pro-French group in Corsica, which included the Bonaparte’s among their number. However the majority of the islanders still supported Paoli and eventually expelled the commissioners and their Republican supporters. Among their number included a young Napoleon, who subsequently looked toward France to advance his military career. Saliceti sent a message to the national assembly dated 14 May 1793, proclaiming that “the rebellion is open; and in the name of Paoli the Corsican people will plunge into an abyss from which it will never escape”.⁶⁷¹

667 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 410.

668 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 410.

669 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 411.

670 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 412.

671 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 416.

Foreign aid was essential for Paoli and Corsica now they were in open rebellion against the French Republic: there were a number of large French garrisons still on the island within the major fortified towns of Bastia, Calvi and St Fiorenzo (see Appendix 3). Only foreign aid and a large fleet could force the complete expulsion of the French from the island. Paoli naturally turned to Britain, and from May 1793 he attempted to contact the British Admiral in the Mediterranean Samuel Hood (1724-1816). The British Mediterranean fleet numbered some 20-25 ships of the line. Their primary objective was to join the Spanish in the blockade of Toulon, where the main French Mediterranean fleet was located. One of the first Corsican attempts to contact the British was Philip Masseria's *Memorial, On the present situation of Corsica*, a copy of which Masseria sent to Hood on the 16 August 1793. Masseria's attached letter stated that the *Memorial* was the 'dear object' of all his wishes, and their objective was "very near of being accomplished".⁶⁷² Within the *Memorial*, Masseria argued that the Corsicans were for a short time "taken by the affected spirit of freedom and philosophy, that possessed the constituent assembly."⁶⁷³ It seems that Masseria still had a certain respect for the principles of the French Revolution. The French revolutionary ideals would never entirely disappear from the thoughts of the Corsicans: the French revolutionary government would always provide an alternative model to the British constitutional system. However, Masseria believed that French headiness and faith were never to "be depended upon".⁶⁷⁴ It was French treachery, rather than the Revolutionary principles themselves, which had caused the Corsicans to rebel. The French Revolution had tempted the Corsicans to "distinguish between French and English character and faith".⁶⁷⁵

There was a clear choice for Corsicans between Britain and France. With the rejection of French rule, British protection provided the only alternative. Masseria claimed that the Corsican "affection for the English...never faded"; Masseria referred to the previous close bonds between Britain and Corsica during 1768-1769. The arguments Masseria used to persuade British intervention in Corsica, were similar to those used in 1768. For example, Masseria referenced the 'happy' situation and security of Corsica's

672 FO 20/22, Philip Masseria, "Memorial on the Present State of Corsica", 16 August 1793.

673 FO 20/22, Masseria, "Memorial", 16 August 1793.

674 FO 20/22, Masseria, "Memorial", 16 August 1793.

675 FO 20/22, Masseria, "Memorial", 16 August 1793.

harbours, which was “well known”.⁶⁷⁶ The Commerce and navigation of Corsica was currently only very small; English industry and wealth would in a short time provide Britain with ‘wines of every route’ and other articles ‘nature produces’ in Corsica.⁶⁷⁷ Masseria’s arguments were nearly identical to those used by Boswell in his *Account of Corsica* more than twenty years earlier. Boswell argued that Corsica was “designed by nature to be strong”; however due to their many wars, they had “no leisure to improve themselves in any art of manufacture”.⁶⁷⁸ Corsica provided the promise of future wealth if aided in its development by British money and industry. More importantly, Corsica would provide Britain an important naval base in the western Mediterranean.

Admiral Hood however decided against immediately aiding the Corsican rebels. Instead a more lucrative prize appeared: Toulon. Hood, acting in cooperation with French royalists was able to seize Toulon on the 27 August 1793. The seizure of one of France’s main naval arsenals was a major blow for the French republic. The French immediately sent forces for its recapture. Admiral Hood was relatively free to act on his own initiative during his command in the Mediterranean. A letter from William Pitt (1759-1806), the then Prime Minister, to the Foreign Secretary William Grenville (1759-1834) dated 10 October 1793, revealed the full powers Hood had in the Mediterranean area. With reports regarding Corsica, Pitt could “not see what instructions can be sent till we hear further, and the business will probably be decided before our instructions could reach”.⁶⁷⁹ In effect, Admiral Hood was free to make his own judgement regarding Toulon and Corsica. Messages were carried in ships, which could take about a month to reach England. It would be impracticable for Hood to await messages from London. According to Pitt, Hood had only informed the Admiralty a short time ago, that he had sent a squadron to Corsica, in consequence of the representations brought by Captain Masseria. Masseria’s *Memorial* certainly had the desired effect in gaining the aid of the British fleet. However only a small squadron under the command of a Captain Linzee was sent. Pitt informed Grenville that Hood’s letters to the admiralty mentioned no ‘particulars’, which led Pitt to conclude that

⁶⁷⁶ FO 20/22, Masseria, “Memorial”, 16 August 1793.

⁶⁷⁷ FO 20/22, Masseria, “Memorial”, 16 August 1793.

⁶⁷⁸ James Boswell, *An Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour of that Island and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli*, 4th ed. (Dublin: Printed for J. Exshaw, 1768), 133-134.

⁶⁷⁹ *The Manuscripts of J.B Fortescue, preserved at Dropmore*, vol. II, (London: Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1894), 441.

“public letters are, I think, so general as to leave us very much in the dark”.⁶⁸⁰ The ministry attempted to alleviate this situation, by appointing a civil commissioner to Toulon. The War Secretary Henry Dundas (1742-1811) informed the king on the 24 September 1793, that Sir Gilbert Elliot, “bearing so important a mission under your majesty, should have the rank of a privy counsellor”.⁶⁸¹ The king replied a day later informing Dundas that the service upon which Elliot was going was “sufficient reason for allowing him to the privy council”.⁶⁸² Elliot was sworn into the privy council that same day, and soon left England to act as the appointed commissioner extraordinary at Toulon. Elliot would become the main civil official in the Mediterranean, and an important actor in the eventual establishment of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom.

Paoli sent a number of letters to Admiral Hood from August to December 1793. Paoli’s letter to Hood dated 6 October best encapsulates his feelings and frustrations at the time. The General thanked Hood for the small squadron sent under the command of Linzee, who were “unhappily” not enough to capture St Florent.⁶⁸³ Paoli hinted in his last letter to Hood his wish for “your powerful protection”; despite the “openings I have made to you in the name of this country”, only one small squadron had been sent. Hood at this time was preoccupied with the siege at Toulon. Paoli was in a weak position: there was a “total want of ammunition”, and of regularly paid troops. Patriotism alone allowed the Corsicans to fight on; their hopes were based upon the “powerful intervention of the British forces”.⁶⁸⁴ Such overtures to a great and mighty nation “could supply for the defence of our recovered original rights”, and “regeneration of this long deprived country”.⁶⁸⁵ Paoli recognised that Corsican independence was unlikely at this point, and therefore looked toward Britain for “your benevolence and protection”.⁶⁸⁶ Paoli had sent Masseria to Italy in order to gain information on British designs. It was only indirectly from one of Hood’s letters to the British consul at Leghorn Mr Sidney, “that you expected I should apply direct for aid

680 *The Manuscripts of J.B Fortescue*, vol. II, 442.

681 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, February 1793 to December 1797, ed. A. Aspinall, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 103.

682 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, 103.

683 FO 28/6, Genoa, January 1793 to December 1793, General Paoli to Lord Hood, 6 October, 1793.

684 FO 28/6, Paoli to Hood, 6 October, 1793.

685 FO 28/6, Paoli to Hood, 6 October, 1793.

686 FO 28/6, Paoli to Hood, 6 October, 1793.

to you”.⁶⁸⁷ Paoli also knew of the confidence the British government had put into Hood’s hands concerning “the expulsion of the French from Corsica”.⁶⁸⁸ Paoli’s intelligence was therefore good enough to know the boundaries of Hood’s power and mission in the Mediterranean.

Only convincing Admiral Hood would allow any British venture into Corsica be made. Therefore, Paoli fell back on the same arguments used throughout the eighteenth century to encourage British intervention on the island. Any intervention by Britain into Corsica would ensure “the advantages that may derive to a great maritime and commercial nation”. Paoli referred to Corsica’s immediate strategic importance, which was obvious to any “that overlooks a map of that sea”.⁶⁸⁹ Corsica’s strategic importance was one of the primary arguments used to promote British intervention on the island throughout the eighteenth century. Britain was first and foremost a maritime power and their navy was their priority. The strategic situation of Corsica was of even greater importance at this point in time due to the war with France. Corsica also had many commodities by nature, which could be “richly susceptible” with vigour and activity for “a rich and manufacturing nation”, whose “beneficent effect of an enlightened government and of a wise administration” could help the “prosperity of the country”.⁶⁹⁰ Corsica had much promise for commercial and industrial development. Paoli’s language in his letter clearly showcased his admiration for the British constitutional system: he wanted to fix Corsica’s “destiny by making us share the advantages that from the British laws and British constitution are ensured to all that enjoy the happiness of constituting a part of the British monarchy”.⁶⁹¹

Paoli’s letter to Hood also contained the first suggestions concerning a union between Britain and Corsica. This union would be based upon the British constitution. Paoli’s letters, however, could not convince Hood to change his plans; Toulon was clearly a far more important strategic target. The Admiral had only some 20-25 ships available, and all were needed for the siege of Toulon. He needed to be seen supporting the

687 FO 28/6, Paoli to Hood, 6 October, 1793.

688 FO 28/6, Paoli to Hood, 6 October, 1793.

689 FO 28/6, Paoli to Hood, 6 October, 1793.

690 FO 28/6, Paoli to Hood, 6 October, 1793.

691 FO 28/6, Paoli to Hood, 6 October, 1793.

French royalists; any abandonment of Toulon would be seen as forsaking their cause. Paoli's frustrations concerning the lack of British aid were clearly evident in a letter he sent to Masseria dated the 24 October 1793. Paoli informed Masseria that he was "very anxious" that "I have not received yet any letter from you".⁶⁹² The English had 'quitted' the seas, and "have discouraged our people, and all my influence is required to persuade them, that the English will certainly assist".⁶⁹³ Paoli's authority and position was entirely reliant upon the promise of English aid. The answers to the letters Paoli had sent to the English were an "absolute necessity". Corsica's internal situation "requires many changes that can not be executed but by an assembly".⁶⁹⁴ The calling of an assembly was delayed until a decision could be made "upon the political affairs of the country"; namely whether Corsica would form a union with Britain or not.⁶⁹⁵

What is clear in Paoli's letters is that Corsica could no longer maintain itself as an independent power: there was a choice between French and British rule. For Paoli the choice was clear; he would not accept the "bloody Jacobin faction", and the "Corsicans will never declare themselves Royalists because they will never ratify the unjust conquest" in 1769.⁶⁹⁶ Paoli and many Corsicans still had ingrained resentment against France following the conquest of the island in 1769. Paoli's 24 October 1793 letter to Masseria was an attachment to a dispatch Masseria had sent to 240 Oxford Street, on the 13 December 1793. Masseria informed his contact in London that Corsica was in need of an English garrison and that any delay in furnishing troops could prove 'fatal'.⁶⁹⁷ The lack of British response to Paoli and Masseria suggested a lack of real interest in Corsica as a strategic target. However, Britain's actions were determined entirely by the war effort. Toulon was certainly a higher priority target than Corsica; the main strategic promise of Corsica was its proximity to Toulon.

The proposition of an Anglo-Corsican union-January 1794

The strategic situation in the Mediterranean would radically change in December 1793, when Hood was compelled to withdraw from Toulon. Through the actions of a young

692 FO 20/22, 13 December 1793, Italian Letter from Paoli to Masseria, 24 October, 1793.

693 FO 20/22, Paoli to Masseria, 24 October, 1793.

694 FO 20/22, Paoli to Masseria, 24 October, 1793.

695 FO 20/22, Paoli to Masseria, 24 October, 1793.

696 FO 20/22, Paoli to Masseria, 24 October, 1793.

697 FO 20/22, Masseria, 13, December, 1793.

artillery officer, Napoleon Bonaparte, the British and Spanish fleets had been compelled to evacuate Toulon along with a number of Royalist emigrants. Corsica was the next obvious choice for a base in the Mediterranean. Sir Gilbert Elliot had arrived in the Mediterranean during the latter stages of the siege of Toulon to undertake all civil matters in the region. Elliot and Hood were the main decision maker behind British policy in the Mediterranean area. It was soon agreed that Corsica was the most viable base for the British navy following the loss of Toulon. Elliot's plans for any future settlement of Corsica was clearly laid out in his dispatch sent to Henry Dundas, dated 7 January 1794. Elliot informed Dundas of the assurances provided by Paoli, that "the only wish the people entertain, is to come under his majesty's protection in any form, and under any conditions". Their only desire was for a "reasonable degree of liberty in their internal government".⁶⁹⁸ Elliot wished to know the King's opinion concerning a connection between Britain and Corsica, and was desirable "that instructions on the point, should be forwarded as speedily as possible".⁶⁹⁹ Elliot, in his capacity as civil commissioner of the Mediterranean was able to act relatively independently, regarding any deals made with any prospective ally. However, in respect to major constitutional acts, particularity regarding a potential union with Corsica, Elliot had to refer to London. Elliot believed there were two choices regarding the future of Corsica: either to have it become "part of his majesty's dominions, and as a dependency of Great Britain", or to "establish the independence of the island".⁷⁰⁰ These two options were both suggested by Paoli in his previous letters to Hood. For Elliot, two leading questions need to be asked: which was the most 'secure' and which will be the least 'expensive'.⁷⁰¹ This was the typical approach of British foreign policy during the eighteenth century.

The war with France, and the vast subsidies Britain provided to her allies, inevitably meant money was limited. Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758-1805), later Lord Nelson and victor at Trafalgar (1805), wrote to his wife, that "poor old England will be drained of her riches to maintain her allies, who will not fight for themselves".⁷⁰² In

698 FO 20/2, Elliot to Dundas, 7 January, 1794.

699 FO 20/2, Elliot to Dundas, 7 January, 1794.

700 FO 20/2, Elliot to Dundas, 7 January 1794.

701 FO 20/2, Elliot to Dundas, 7 January 1794.

702 Horatio Nelson, *Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*, vol 1, 1777 to 1794, (London: Henry Colburn, 1844), 492.

Nelson's opinion, Britain's riches were wasted on allies, whose commitment to the war was questionable. Therefore, Elliot believed that an independent Corsica would have to be defended "against an enemy, in the same manner, and by the same expense, as if it were a dependent dominion".⁷⁰³ Elliot was the first major British official to suggest a union between Britain and Corsica. He was also aware that he would be in charge of its civil government if the island were to come under British dominion. Elliot himself would only benefit if Corsica would become a dominion under Britain. However, Elliot's suggestion was not merely self-arrangement. A union between Britain and Corsica seemed to be the only viable method during a wartime situation. An independent Corsica could not hope to sustain itself in the face of a powerful French republic.

Elliot, accompanied by Colonel John Moore and Major Kochler arrived on Corsica on 14 January 1794, to ascertain the practicability of a British expedition to Corsica. Sir John Moore (1761-1809) was an eye witness account, writing his *Diary* of the events. Moore commented that the Corsican "people seemed happy to see us, and gave us three cheers".⁷⁰⁴ The Corsicans "expressed much pleasure at seeing us, and great love for the English nation, who they hoped would deliver them from the French".⁷⁰⁵ Paoli's claim that the Corsicans still harboured a strong attachment to England was proven correct. Moore also noted Paoli's continued popularity among the Corsican people. When Moore, Elliot and Kochler arrived at Murato on the 16 January 1794, Moore noted that Paoli was in the Convent, surrounded by armed peasantry. These men received no pay, and came voluntarily to defend the General. This for Moore was "strong proof of [the] attachment these poor people give to General Paoli".⁷⁰⁶ Elliot also noted that the mass Corsican support for Paoli was not an "artificial cry".⁷⁰⁷ Both Moore and Elliot noted the Corsican chants of "viva Paoli, la Patria e la Nazione

⁷⁰³ FO 20/2, Elliot to Dundas, 7 January 1794.

⁷⁰⁴ Sir John Moore, *The Diary of Sir John Moore*, vol. I, ed. Sir J.F. Maurice, (London: Edward Arnold, 1904), 42.

⁷⁰⁵ Moore, *Diary*, 43.

⁷⁰⁶ Moore, *Diary*, 44.

⁷⁰⁷ Sir Gilbert Elliot, *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot*, vol. II, ed. Countess of Minto, (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1874), 215.

Inglesse”.⁷⁰⁸ To Elliot, Paoli was “invested with sufficient authority to speak for his countrymen”.⁷⁰⁹

What was resolved at the conference at Murato was very much a subject of debate amongst those involved. Elliot claimed later in a ‘secret’ dispatch to the Duke of Portland, dated 19 February 1795, that Paoli, during the interview with Elliot in January 1794, “never lost an opportunity of giving me to understand that he was determined to quit the island, and that he could not indeed live in the climate of Corsica”.⁷¹⁰ Moore commented that “the General is much broken since I saw him in England”, although this was also due in part due to the death of his only brother Clemente, “to whom he was much attached”.⁷¹¹ Paoli himself did give certain hints of his poor health. One of his main reasons given for not attending the first Anglo-Corsican parliament in February 1795, was “my age” and “painful ailments”, which “do not allow me” to ride long trips on horseback.⁷¹² Paoli at various times gave Elliot hints that his poor health would force his retirement from public life. Paoli however had no intention of leaving Corsica, contrary to the pact agreed at Murato, and seemed equally determined to maintain his political influence on the island.

Perhaps the most important result to come from the negotiations at Murato, however, was the assurance given to Paoli for British intervention in Corsica. Elliot’s main object was for the “assembling the states or otherwise, of getting the public assent of the island to what the General said was their wish”.⁷¹³ Elliot was following the plans he had laid out to Dundas, in his letter dated 7 January 1794. Elliot’s main aim was to gain a ‘formal engagement’ from Paoli, and from those “who appear legally entitled to represent his people”.⁷¹⁴ Only a Corsican assembly could approve of any potential union between Britain and Corsica, and Elliot wanted the union between Britain and Corsica to appear as legal as possible: Britain would appear as liberators rather than conquerors as the French had done. Paoli, however, believed that the French had to be

⁷⁰⁸ Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 215, Moore, *Diary*, 44.

⁷⁰⁹ Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 214.

⁷¹⁰ FO 20/22, Elliot to the Duke of Portland, 19 February 1795.

⁷¹¹ Moore, *Diary*, 46.

⁷¹² Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 520.

⁷¹³ Moore, *Diary*, 45.

⁷¹⁴ FO 20/2 Elliot to Dundas, 7 January 1794.

first expelled from the island before an assembly could be formed. Moore commented that Paoli was satisfied with the assurances Elliot had given him concerning British intervention on the island. They would leave “the particular mode of government which might be adopted” to “the King and his ministers”.⁷¹⁵ Moore and Elliot left Corsica on the 20 January; Kochler stayed behind at the request of Paoli, as he was “afraid that, if we all left him, it might have a bad effect upon his people”.⁷¹⁶ Once Elliot and Moore returned to the fleet Hood immediately dispatched a force to Corsica, the first British troops landing on the 7 February 1794.

The Establishment of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom- February 1794-June 1794

British intervention in Corsica came about primarily due to military and strategic considerations: without the wartime situation, the union certainly would not have happened. Only the promptings by the Anglophile Paoli persuaded Hood and Elliot to intervene in Corsica. Many of the arguments used to encourage British intervention in Corsica in 1794 were the same as those professed in 1768. Boswell’s *Account of Corsica* (1768) was still the main source of information in Britain regarding Corsica. It was translated into several different languages and went through a number of editions. Perhaps the greatest example of Boswell’s influence can be seen in the August 1794 edition of *The Edinburgh Magazine*. The article entitled “Description of Corsica” described the island, “now happily united to the crown of Great Britain”.⁷¹⁷ The writer believed that for any detailed particulars of Corsica, you “must refer to Mr Boswell’s description of it, and of its chief Paoli, published 1778”.⁷¹⁸ The article quoted directly from Boswell’s *Account of Corsica*. For example, the article stated that Corsica was “remarkably well furnished with good harbours”. This sentence was near identical to Boswell’s description of the harbours of Corsica in his *Account of Corsica*.⁷¹⁹ Boswell was not the only intellectual source of information that influenced British opinions concerning Corsica, however. The writer of the “Description of Corsica” hoped that the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom would “one day”, in the words of the French philosopher

⁷¹⁵ Moore, *Diary*, 47.

⁷¹⁶ Moore, *Diary*, 47.

⁷¹⁷ “Description of Corsica”, *The Edinburgh Magazine, or Literary Miscellany*, August 1794, 121-122, 121.

⁷¹⁸ “Description of Corsica”, *The Edinburgh Magazine*, 122.

⁷¹⁹ “Description of Corsica”, *The Edinburgh Magazine*, 122, Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 133.

Rousseau, “astonish Europe”.⁷²⁰ The writer directly quoted from Rousseau’s famous paragraph concerning Corsica in the *Social Contract* (1762). Rousseau had followed up his interest in Corsica, with the publication of his *Constitutional project for Corsica* (1765), in which he expanded upon the paragraph he had devoted to Corsica in the *Social Contract*. Rousseau argued that the Corsican people were ‘fortunate’; for the establishment of a good constitution, they could “begin at the beginning, and take the steps to prevent degeneration”.⁷²¹ Due to the undeveloped nature of Corsica, the Corsicans had not “yet adopted the vices of other nations”.⁷²² Rousseau and Boswell provided the ideas which prompted British intervention into Corsica. Both agreed that the main draw of Corsica was its potential for development. For Rousseau, Corsica was still in a ‘state of nature’, uncorrupted by the ‘vices’ of the modern world. Boswell in contrast focused far more on Corsica’s commercial potential. Boswell believed that an “alliance with this island” would be of “great consequence” to “any of the maritime powers of Europe”.⁷²³ Corsica’s harbours could be developed, allowing the island to become the main naval base for Britain in the Mediterranean.

Corsica’s strategic importance was the primary impulse for Elliot and Hood’s decision for a union with Corsica. However, ideas concerning Corsica’s potential for development also influenced this decision. In a letter to his friend William Suckling dated 7 February 1795, Nelson expressed his belief that Britain’s union with Corsica would allow “the inhabitants” to “grow rich, and I hope, happy, under our mild government”.⁷²⁴ Nelson, as a naval officer, recognised the “convenient ports for our fleets”; he was “satisfied of Lord Hood’s great wisdom in sealing possession of it [Corsica]”.⁷²⁵ However, he also believed in Corsica’s potential development under British rule. Under French rule every Corsican carried a gun; now not one man in fifty carried arms, and “their swords are really turned into ploughshares”.⁷²⁶ British rule had encouraged the development of industry and agriculture. As a result, the expense of

720 “Description of Corsica”, *The Edinburgh Magazine*, 122.

721 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Constitutional Project for Corsica”, *Political Writings*, ed. and tr. Frederick Williams, (Wisconsin: The university of Wisconsin press, 1986), 278.

722 Rousseau, “Constitutional Project for Corsica”, 278.

723 Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 16.

724 Nelson, *Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*, vol. II, 1795 to 1797, (London: Henry Colburn, 1845), 5.

725 Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 4.

726 Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 5.

keeping the island “will be very trifling, and its importance to us very great”.⁷²⁷ Nelson’s comments were written during the early stages of the Anglo-Corsican kingdom. Many wrote of Corsica’s potential for development: how far was this actually the case? The course of the Anglo-Corsican kingdom would expose the ‘myth’ of Corsica’s potential for development. The wild praises Boswell gave concerning Corsica’s potential for development, would ultimately hinder the very cause he attempted to espouse. Expectations over Corsica’s potential for development had been raised too high. The establishment of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom would slowly debunk the ‘myth’ of Corsica’s potential for development.

The military operations on the island questioned the great martial abilities Boswell and other British writers had attributed to the Corsican soldiers. Before military operations had begun in earnest, Nelson wrote to his wife on the 24 February 1794, that the Corsicans were “a brave people, and free”.⁷²⁸ However, in a letter sent to Lord Hood on 11 March 1794, Nelson complained that the ‘poor Corsicans’ “know nothing, but how to fire a musket; yet certainly a good use may be made of them”.⁷²⁹ Colonel Moore however painted a more damning picture of the Corsican’s military ability, and particularly that of Paoli. Moore complained that “the great cause of the failure of the expedition has been the failure upon the part of General Paoli and Corsicans”.⁷³⁰ Moore lamented the difficulties surrounding the siege of Bastia, held by a large French garrison. Moore felt that “instead of the active, warlike people I took them to be, zealous in the cause of liberty,” the Corsicans “have proved to be a poor, idle, mean set, incapable of any action which requires steadiness or resolution, and have been absolutely of no use to us since we landed”.⁷³¹ Moore was reflecting upon the image Boswell had provided of the Corsicans martial character. Boswell’s hero worshipping of Paoli and the Corsican cause meant that his writings were at times contrary to reality. Boswell had only created an image of what he believed the Corsican martial spirit was, and described them as such. The realities found on Corsica would always seem disappointing compared to the imagery provided by Boswell. The Corsicans were

⁷²⁷ Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 5.

⁷²⁸ Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. I, 361.

⁷²⁹ Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. I, 371.

⁷³⁰ Moore, *Diary*, 83.

⁷³¹ Moore, *Diary*, 83.

in fact not suited to the professional style of warfare practised by the main European powers. The Corsicans fought within irregular groups, usually adapted to fighting in the mountains. They were therefore unsuited to the needs of professional warfare. Ironically, the biggest problem faced by Britain during these military operations was the lack of troops available. There were only an estimated 1000 British troops available for operations on the island, excluding any marines from the navy. The low number of British troops on the island would be a constant source of irritation for the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom, as will be seen in the next section.

On 19 April 1794, Elliot informed Paoli, that the propositions arranged at Murato had been approved by His Majesty and the ministry.⁷³² The English plenipotentiaries Hood and Elliot, informed Paoli in a letter dated April 21st 1794, that the British government was willing to provide the Corsicans “eternal security and preservation of their independence and freedom for the future”.⁷³³ Hood and Elliot set out the preliminaries for the union between Britain and Corsica. The two nations would come under a “common sovereign” in the person of George III. However, the British would “ensure at the same time forever the independence of Corsica, and the maintenance of the ancient constitution, laws and religion”.⁷³⁴ The ‘independence’ of Corsica was one of the primary reasons why Paoli chose a British rather than French future for the island. For Paoli “Corsica was no longer Corsica, reunited to France”; at least under British rule “we do not lose the country name”.⁷³⁵ Under the French revolutionary government, Corsica became united with France and became a department: for Paoli, Corsica lost its unique history and identity when it was united with France. In a letter to his friend Galeazzi, Paoli believed that “if the English constitution had defects, [we] can correct them in its [Corsica’s] constitution, to ensure his [the king’s] happiness and freedom”.⁷³⁶ The new Anglo-Corsican constitution could be formed to suit the needs and characteristics of Corsica. Paoli rather naively believed that “the Kingdom of Corsica will now be at least as free as that of England”.⁷³⁷ If Paoli knew the true nature of the British Empire, he would have known that any overseas territories did not share

⁷³² Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 484.

⁷³³ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 485.

⁷³⁴ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 485.

⁷³⁵ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 485.

⁷³⁶ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 485.

⁷³⁷ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 485.

the same liberties enjoyed in England. Nevertheless, soon after the fall of Bastia to British forces on 19 May, discussions were made regarding the potential union between Britain and Corsica. Between 1 and 19 June, the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was established and its unique constitution adopted.

The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom: its constitution and influences

What form of government would the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom adopt? This was the major question which plagued British constitutionalists during June 1794. Paoli himself had suggested to Hood in 1793 that “the form of the government in this island might be established as analogue as possible to that of England”. The model Paoli had in mind was “that of Ireland modified according to the circumstances of this people might also be taken into consideration”.⁷³⁸ Paoli’s ideas would be closely followed in the formation of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. More specifically, Paoli’s idea that the Corsicans own “circumstances” should be considered was taken into account by those drafting the Anglo-Corsican constitution. British ideas concerning Corsica stemmed from some fifty years of interactions and relations with the island, as will be seen when studying the articles of the Anglo-Corsican constitution.

British constitutionalism underwent a number of major changes following the declaration of independence of the American colonies in 1776. The American revolutionary war challenged the very conceptions of British constitutional government. The American colonies provided a challenge to what was believed then to be the most superior government in the world. Britain slowly began to appreciate the need to change the laws and constitutions that governed some of their overseas colonies. This of course concerned predominately European populated territories. The first evidence of this change in British constitutional government could be seen in the “Royal instructions to the Peace commission”, on April 12 1778. The American war had been progressing badly for Britain; therefore the government were willing to give ground regarding American self-rule. This was evidenced when the peace commission offered the American colonists ‘a general assembly’, in the nature of the present congress, which was to consist of delegates from each of the colonies. They would

⁷³⁸ FO 28/6, Paoli to Hood, 6 October 1793.

meet in congress “for the better management of the general concerns and interests of the said colonies”.⁷³⁹ However, “the sovereignty of the mother country should not be infringed”, nor any powers ascribed to the said congress “be capable of being construed into an impeachment of the sovereign rights of his majesty, and the constitutional control of this country”.⁷⁴⁰ Britain would still maintain sovereign rights over the American colonies. If it was desired that any American subjects wished to have a share of representation in the House of Commons, “the number of the representatives, which ought to be very small”, would be properly considered.⁷⁴¹ The British commission offered very little to an already independent American Republic, who currently had the upper hand in the war. Such was the arrogance and belief Britain had in its constitution and laws. The peace commission did however highlight the first hint of changes to ideas concerning British constitutional government overseas.

The British peace commission of 1778 was rejected out of hand by the American government. In 1782, with their impending loss in the American war, there was an acceptance by the British government that changes needed to be made to the constitutional governments in other British ruled territories. More particularly, they feared an American style revolution in their most immediate neighbour Ireland. On the 17 May 1782, two resolutions were passed by the then Prime Minister Lord Shelburne in the House of Lords. The first resolution was that the act of George I, “securing the dependency of Ireland upon the crown of Great Britain” ought to be repealed.⁷⁴² The second resolution stated “that it is indispensable to the interest and happiness of both kingdoms, that the connection between them should be established by mutual consent”.⁷⁴³ Ireland and England historically had a very chequered relationship. It was believed that the total repeal of the statute of 1720, would remove the chief cause of the Irish parliaments discontent. In a secret dispatch from Shelburne to the Duke of Portland, dated 18 May 1782, Shelburne stated that “the subject of a superintending power [was] to be reserved to this country, for all purposes of common concern,

⁷³⁹ *British Colonial Developments 1774-1834: Select Documents*, ed. V. Harlow and F. Madden, (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1953), 172.

⁷⁴⁰ *British Colonial Developments*, 172.

⁷⁴¹ *British Colonial Developments*, 173.

⁷⁴² *British Colonial Developments*, 175.

⁷⁴³ *British Colonial Developments*, 175.

whether in matters of state or general commerce”.⁷⁴⁴ In a later dispatch from William Pitt to the Duke of Portland dated the 7 October 1784, Pitt wanted “to give Ireland an almost unlimited communication of commercial advantages”.⁷⁴⁵ In return, Britain would receive some security that Ireland’s “strength and riches will be our benefit”.⁷⁴⁶

William Pitt the younger (1759-1806) became the prime minister in December 1783; he remained in office until 1801. Pitt, in a letter sent to the Duke of Rutland on the 6 January 1785, stated that Britain had made “England and Ireland one country in effect, though for local concerns under distinct legislatures”.⁷⁴⁷ This was the model which Paoli referred to in his letter to Hood. The Anglo-Corsican constitution however was very much different to the Irish model. James Caulfeild, first Earl of Charlemont (1728-1799) complained to Edward Malone on 29 October 1794, that Britain’s ministers or “rather minister”, seem “neither to care for, think of indeed know Ireland”.⁷⁴⁸ Rather, Pitt cared only for “his own grand acquisition, the new magnificent kingdom [Corsica], claims more of his attention”.⁷⁴⁹ The historical relations Britain had with Ireland were very much different to those with Corsica. Whereas the Corsicans were traditionally seen to be a sister nation, Ireland was viewed by many in England as a Catholic backwater, distinct from Britain and her liberties and virtues. British connotations of the Corsican character and government would play a far larger role in the formation of the Anglo-Corsican constitution than imitating the Irish model. However, Ireland did provide an outline for Elliot and the other British legislators to follow.

The Anglo-Corsican Constitution was divided into twelve different chapters. Each chapter was composed of several articles, anywhere on the scale of three to twelve. At first glance, the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom’s constitution did appear to be “a counterpart of that of Great Britain”.⁷⁵⁰ Chapter one, article two, detailed that

⁷⁴⁴ *British Colonial Developments*, 177.

⁷⁴⁵ *British Colonial Developments* 178.

⁷⁴⁶ *British Colonial Developments*, 178.

⁷⁴⁷ *British Colonial Developments*, 179.

⁷⁴⁸ James Caulfeild, *The Manuscripts and Correspondence of James, First Earl of Charlemont*, vol. II, (London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1894), 251.

⁷⁴⁹ Caulfeild, *Correspondence of Earl of Charlemont*, 251.

⁷⁵⁰ *Times*, (London, England), 28 July 1794; Issue 3052.

legislative power was vested in the “king, and in the representatives of the people, lawfully elected and convened”.⁷⁵¹ Article three stated that the legislature would be renamed as “parliament”, and the representatives “styled members of the parliament”.⁷⁵² Clearly, in many respects the Anglo-Corsican constitution sought to emulate the British model as much as possible. Chapter two, article one, detailed that the territory was to be divided into “Pieves” (districts); each Pieve and towns on the coast with “3000 souls and upwards” had the right to send two members to parliament. Bishops also recognised by the Corsican nation, “shall be members of parliament”, as observed in the British House of Lords.⁷⁵³ Members of parliament would need to be above twenty-five years of age, and must possess at least 6000 livres in land.⁷⁵⁴ As in England, land ownership was prerequisite to becoming a member of parliament. One of the most notable differences was that the Anglo-Corsican parliament had only one house. There was no distinction between a House of ‘Lords’ or ‘Commons’. Instead there was only one chamber, which had “the right of enacting all the acts which are intended to have a force of law”.⁷⁵⁵ There was no major landed nobility of Corsica to speak of due to the constant foreign occupation of the island. The Genoese republic did not allow a rich and powerful Corsican nobility to develop. Here was one example where the Anglo-Corsican constitution was adapted to Corsica’s unique situation. It also had far shorter fixed terms for parliament than in England, with the duration of one parliament two years.⁷⁵⁶ This was far shorter than the seven year parliaments in England, which had been set by the Septennial Act in 1716. Regular parliaments in Corsica meant that no one party could become too powerful within the parliament chamber.

One of the major differences between the Anglo-Corsican and Irish/English constitutions, was that Catholicism was “the only national religion in Corsica”.⁷⁵⁷ This was a rather extraordinary act considering that Britain was a Protestant power. During the first half of the eighteenth century, British foreign policy became identified with its

⁷⁵¹ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 104.

⁷⁵² *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 104.

⁷⁵³ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 104.

⁷⁵⁴ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 104.

⁷⁵⁵ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 104.

⁷⁵⁶ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 104.

⁷⁵⁷ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 108.

‘protestant mission’. Tony Claydon in his book *Europe and the making of England 1660-1760*, argues that the English “saw themselves primarily as a protestant people: a Christian nation chosen by God to uphold the true religion and to crush the anti-Christian distortions of his faith which were embodied in the church of Rome”.⁷⁵⁸ The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom seems to contradict this hypothesis. There were two reasons why Catholicism was accepted as the national religion in Corsica. The first reason was that Corsica was nearly 100% Catholic; it would be impolitic to exempt the entire population from government. The second reason was the unique opinion many in Britain had of Corsica. Many Britons believed the Corsicans to be ‘noble’ and ‘brave’ warriors, who could furnish for Britain some 40,000 soldiers.⁷⁵⁹ Corsica was a less developed version of Britain. The Catholicism of the Corsicans was in fact rarely spoken of, either by government officials or the British newspapers.

Britain’s ‘protestant mission’ had very little influence upon British foreign policy during the latter half of the eighteenth century. As the case study of Corsica highlights, the ideal of liberty was believed to be a far stronger bond between nations than religion. However, it may also be argued that it was simply expedient to accept the catholic religion in Corsica. It would be unwise, especially in a wartime situation, to challenge the established religion. In fact, during the French Revolutionary wars religion played little to no impact upon British foreign policy. Britain made a wide variety of alliances with Catholic powers, including the Pope: defeating France remained the priority. The Anglo-Corsican constitution also allowed for the parliament “to determine on the number of parishes, to settle the salaries of the priests”.⁷⁶⁰ Ecclesiastical services became subservient to the legislative body. This article caused frictions with the Pope in Rome, who believed that the constitution of Corsica placed constraints upon the catholic religion. Rome believed that only the pope could appoint bishops to parishes, and feared the actions of a protestant power in Corsica.⁷⁶¹ This was one of the many problems the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom had to face. Viceroy Elliot remarked that they (Roman Bishops) had “certainly not read the constitution of Corsica

⁷⁵⁸ Tony Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England 1660-1760*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5.

⁷⁵⁹ *London Packet*, 30 July- 1 August 1794; Issue 3894.

⁷⁶⁰ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 108.

⁷⁶¹ Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 275.

at Rome”.⁷⁶² Elliot claimed that the constitution made no mention of bishops or parishes, and all matters would be concerted by the parliament of Corsica.⁷⁶³ This was a relatively minor issue for the Viceroy. However, it showcased some of the problems created by the language and wording of the Anglo-Corsican constitution.

In certain respects, the Corsican Kingdom had more freedoms than England. One example was the article in the constitution stating that “all other modes of worship are tolerated”.⁷⁶⁴ This religious toleration went further than the acts in England. The toleration act of 1688 “admitted the legal existence of religious congregation outside the Church of England”.⁷⁶⁵ However, both the penal laws and corporation acts still remained in place in England, preventing both dissenters and Catholics from taking public office. English Catholics were excluded from public life and advancement in professions.⁷⁶⁶ Irish Catholics were not much better off, with Irish parliaments ruled predominantly by a small Protestant elite. This made the toleration article contained within the Anglo-Corsican constitution more remarkable. Any religious group could potentially gain public office in Corsica. Britain would not reach the same level of religious toleration as Corsica for another thirty-five years, with the Catholic emancipation act of 1829, which relieved both the test act and penal laws. The Anglo-Corsican constitution also stated that all “forms and procedures of enacting laws, and of determining other matters in the house”, not fixed by the constitution, would be regulated by parliament.⁷⁶⁷ With no House of Lords, the parliament chamber was the primary legislative body in the country. Any non-appearance by an MP would be punishable by a fine of 200 livres.⁷⁶⁸ For certain writers in Britain, the Anglo-Corsican constitution contained in principle “that very system of representation, which has been so long and unsuccessfully fought to be obtained by the people of Great Britain and Ireland, from a parliamentary reform”.⁷⁶⁹ The article entitled “An address to the Prime

⁷⁶² Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 275.

⁷⁶³ Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 275.

⁷⁶⁴ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 108.

⁷⁶⁵ Ursula Henriques, *Religious Toleration in England 1787-1833*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), 3.

⁷⁶⁶ Henriques, *Religious Toleration in England*, 137.

⁷⁶⁷ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 105.

⁷⁶⁸ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 105.

⁷⁶⁹ Tobias Smollett, “An address to the Prime Minister of the King of Corsica”, *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*, vol. 14, (June 1795), 217-218, 217.

minister of the King of Corsica”, was reviewed by Tobias Smollett, editor of *The Critical review*. Smollett believed that the chief object of the pamphlet had been “clearly proved”; that “the Corsicans have obtained a full, free, and fair representation in their parliament”.⁷⁷⁰ One article of the Anglo-Corsican constitution, for example, stated that “no member of parliament shall be called into account” by any other authority “except by that of the house itself”.⁷⁷¹ Parliament was the main legislative body in Corsica, and not constrained by an all powerful House of Lords, as was the case in England.

Why was the Anglo-Corsican constitution so uniquely created for Corsica? The constitution reflected the high opinion held by the British of the Corsicans as a ‘sister’ nation. The particular situation and circumstances of Corsica produced an equally unique constitutional model. The Anglo-Corsican constitution was clearly influenced by the previous ideas and notion of the island formed in Britain over the previous fifty years: only this can explain the unique constitution and the numerous political advantages provided to the island by Britain. However, what should be remembered was that Corsica was still a subject nation and territory of the British Empire. This point was most vividly emphasised in the third article of chapter nine, which stated that Corsica “will consider every attempt which in war or in peace shall be made to promote the glory of his majesty, and the interests of the empire of Great Britain”.⁷⁷² Corsica’s purpose was to solely serve the interest of the British Empire. Perhaps more importantly, the parliament of Corsica “will always manifest its readiness and deference to adopt all regulations” consistent to those enacted by the Parliament of Great Britain, “for the extension and advantage of the external commerce of the empire, and of its dependencies”.⁷⁷³ The parliament of Corsica would always be subservient to that in Westminster. This article perhaps best encapsulates Britain’s ideas regarding Corsica. Britain was first and foremost a commercial empire; Corsica merely was to provide an ‘extension’ to the mercantile system. The ‘superiority’ of the Anglo-Corsican constitution over its English counterpart was also contradicted by one all-encompassing office of power; the Viceroy.

⁷⁷⁰ Smollett, *The Critical Review*, 217.

⁷⁷¹ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 106.

⁷⁷² *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 108.

⁷⁷³ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 108.

The most unique, and perhaps most controversial aspect of the Anglo-Corsican constitution was the employment of a Viceroy, who was the king's "immediate representative in Corsica".⁷⁷⁴ The Viceroy was given a wide range of powers, including "the power of giving his sanction or refusal to the decrees of parliament". The Viceroy in effect could supersede the decrees of parliament. The executive power of the British system was encapsulated within one person in Corsica. Moreover, the Viceroy had to preform, in the King's name "all the acts of government which are within the limits of the royal authority".⁷⁷⁵ The Viceroy in this respect would be assisted by "a board of council and a secretary of state".⁷⁷⁶ The King was given a wide amount of powers by the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. The Viceroy, as the representative of the King, would embody those powers, including the right to "dissolve" or to "prorogue parliament".⁷⁷⁷ The Viceroy was also invested with the power to "open the sessions in person, and declare the reasons for convoking the parliament".⁷⁷⁸ In this respect the Viceroy had wider ranging powers than the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

The office of the Viceroy of Corsica was heavily influenced by example of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The Lord Lieutenant similarly represented king, and was his "personal deputy" in Ireland.⁷⁷⁹ The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland held many similar powers to the Viceroy of Corsica. All ecclesiastical and civil appointments in Ireland were made on the advice and recommendation of the Lord Lieutenant.⁷⁸⁰ However, in Ireland, the executive and legislature were distinctly separate. The Lord Lieutenant could not dissolve parliament like the Viceroy of Corsica; he would manage the Irish parliament through the 'golden chains' of peerage, positions and pensions that all passed through his hands.⁷⁸¹ The office of Viceroy was a contentious issue throughout the existence of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. Given the wide range of powers invested in the Viceroy, whoever held the office became in effect, the ruler of Corsica.

⁷⁷⁴ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 106.

⁷⁷⁵ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 106.

⁷⁷⁶ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 106.

⁷⁷⁷ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 105.

⁷⁷⁸ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 105.

⁷⁷⁹ Edith Johnson, *Great Britain and Ireland 1760-1800: A Study in Political Administration*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), 12.

⁷⁸⁰ Johnson, *Great Britain and Ireland 1760-1800*, 27.

⁷⁸¹ Johnson, *Great Britain and Ireland 1760-1800*, 28.

Chapter five, article eight of the constitution stated that the king “shall appoint [whom he wishes] to all the offices of government”.⁷⁸² This duty in reality was placed entirely upon the shoulders of the Viceroy: due to the long distance in communication between Corsica and Britain, the ministers in London usually acquiesced to the appointments made by the Viceroy. The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland was usually more bound to the English cabinet; every decision of Irish policy was submitted to the king for his approval.⁷⁸³ The office of the Viceroy was the most contentious, and eventually most ruinous aspect of the Anglo-Corsican constitution. The office was highly coveted; whoever was appointed to the office would have a wide variety of powers at their disposal. Whether Sir Gilbert Elliot was the right appointment as Viceroy also remained a contentious issue for contemporaries.

Reactions to the formation of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom in England

Reactions in Britain to the establishment of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom were generally mixed, and split between those for and against intervention. What is important to remember is that the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was primarily a government venture. During the 1768 Corsican Crisis, intervention in Corsica was supported by a wider strata of literate society. As illustrated in the second chapter, the Corsican cause in Britain was endorsed by the opposition to government in 1768. In contrast, the 1794 Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was a government scheme. The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom never obtained the wide spread support enjoyed by Paoli and the Corsicans in 1768. Why was this the case? The 26-29 July 1794 edition of the *General Evening post* noted that the ‘ministerialists’ magnified “the benefits likely to be derived from” the acquisition of Corsica, whilst the opposition depreciated and condemned “the false policy which dictated the measure”.⁷⁸⁴ Those writers who supported the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom, also promoted the “ruinous war” policy practised by the British government.⁷⁸⁵ British public opinion during the French revolutionary wars was split. There were many opponents of the war, who called themselves the ‘Friends of peace’. These ‘Friends of peace’ were not a “formally

⁷⁸² *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 106.

⁷⁸³ Johnson, *Great Britain and Ireland 1760-1800*, 13.

⁷⁸⁴ *General Evening Post*, (London, England), 26-29 July 1794; Issue 9489.

⁷⁸⁵ *Morning Chronicle*, (London, England), 26 July 1794; Issue 7736.

constituted body, with an authority structure”.⁷⁸⁶ They were a wide range of individuals who were bound by their opposition against the war and the “normative order or dominant views of society”.⁷⁸⁷ Within this context, it can be seen that the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was viewed as a product of the loathed war effort against Revolutionary France. The debates within the House of Commons were vigorously reported upon by British newspapers. The Whig MP Richard Sheridan (1751-1816) condemned the “unpardonable blunders which marked the progress of the war, among which were the separate interests we pursued from the Allies at Valenciennes, Toulon, Corsica and the West Indies”.⁷⁸⁸ Sheridan supported the position of the leader of the opposition to Pitt’s government, Charles James Fox (1749-1806). Controversial in his own time, Fox was a known supporter of the French revolution. Fox and Sheridan reflected the widely held view that Pitt’s war policy was separate to that of the other coalition forces. Britain had their own aggrandizement agenda, and were later accused by their continental allies of merely ‘filching’ a few West Indies island. Corsica was included within Britain’s ‘selfish’ policy, which had “disgusted” their allies.⁷⁸⁹

The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was perceived as alienating Britain’s allies and was considered merely to be a tool of British aggrandizement, rather than an active effort to defeat the French Republic. Corsica’s acquisition was not vital for France’s defeat and was considered to be of the “smallest importance in the general scale of politics”.⁷⁹⁰ One of the main criticisms concerning the acquisition of Corsica was the expense incurred in maintaining the island. The 9 April 1795 edition of the *Morning Chronicle* claimed that the French did not disturb Britain in the ‘enjoyment’ of Corsica, as it was “a crown of which they do not envy us the honour or the expense”.⁷⁹¹ This was made worse by the fact that the Corsicans themselves refused to pay taxes; the costs for the administration of the island out-weighed its annual income. The opposition newspaper the *Morning Post and fashionable world* called Corsica a “useless bauble of a

786 J.E Cookson, *The Friends of Peace: Anti-war Liberalism in England 1793-1815*, (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 1982), 1.

787 Cookson, *The Friends of Peace*, 2.

788 *Morning Post and Fashionable World*, (London, England), 25 March 1795; Issue 7222.

789 *Morning Post and Fashionable World*, 25 March 1795.

790 *General Evening Post*, 26-29 July 1794.

791 *Morning Chronicle*, 9 April 1795; Issue 7952.

kingdom”, which would cost Britain more money than it was worth.⁷⁹² The question of Corsica’s value was an issue constantly raised by British newspapers throughout the existence of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom.

Ministerial arguments supporting the occupation of Corsica stemmed from those professed by Boswell back in 1768. The 29 August -1 September 1794 edition of the *London Packet* noted that Corsica was designed by “nature” to be strong at sea, having so many “good harbours” as well as “excellent timber”.⁷⁹³ The article concluded that Corsica was rich naturally in many productions, and that there was no question that “this island might carry on a pretty extensive commerce”.⁷⁹⁴ Corsica’s harbours and naturally rich produce were two typical arguments used to support British intervention into Corsica. These arguments were the same used by Boswell in his *Account of Corsica* (1768). For example, Boswell argued that Corsica was “designed by nature to be strong at sea, having so many good harbours, and so much excellent timber”.⁷⁹⁵ These same arguments were still used some twenty-five years later. Ministerial writers also focused upon the virtues of the Corsicans themselves. The 30 July-1 August 1794 edition of the *London Packet* compared the Corsicans to the “Scotch Highlanders”, and their manners to “the ancient Germans, and they are extremely temperate”.⁷⁹⁶ The Corsicans encapsulated the image of the noble savage. Peter France, in his article *Western European civilisation and its mountain frontiers 1750-1850*, argues that “European writing is full of the opposition between the rational civilised self and the wild other”.⁷⁹⁷ Corsicans were perceived by many Britons to be noble savages, based upon “the manly ideal of Sparta”.⁷⁹⁸ The 9-11 April 1795 edition of the *St James’s Chronicle* commented that the new Anglo-Corsican parliament “will insensible assimilate and familiarize it [Corsica] with the laws a manners, and connect it in interest and affection, to the great Empire which has adopted it”.⁷⁹⁹ British laws and customs could ‘civilize’ the Corsicans, and allow them to eventually become model

⁷⁹² *Morning Post and Fashionable World*, 22 September 1795; Issue 7376.

⁷⁹³ *London Packet*, (London, England), 29 August- 1 September 1794; Issue 3907.

⁷⁹⁴ *London Packet*, 29 August- 1 September 1794.

⁷⁹⁵ Boswell, *Account of Corsica*, 133.

⁷⁹⁶ *London Packet*, 30 July-1 August, 1794.

⁷⁹⁷ Peter France, “Western European Civilisation and its Mountain Frontiers 1750-1850”, *History of European Ideas*, (London: Taylor and Francis, 1985), 297.

⁷⁹⁸ France, “European Civilisation and its Mountain Frontiers”, 303.

⁷⁹⁹ *St James’s Chronicle*, 9-11 April 1795.

citizens. Many writers argued that Britain and Corsica were two isles of liberty. Corsica was simply a less civilised version of Britain.

This image changed during the latter part of 1795. The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom had existed for a year, and had suffered a number of rebellions. The 19 October 1795 edition of the *Star* bemoaned the “fickleness” of the inhabitants, who were most anxious “for the re-establishment of the French in the island”.⁸⁰⁰ The rebellions in 1795 and 1796 were perceived by many in Britain to be a rejection of the British system. For the 23-25 February 1796 edition of the *General Evening post*, the rebellions illustrated a distinct lack of ‘gratitude’, which they owed “for the protection” provided by the British government.⁸⁰¹ The article noted that the Corsicans were “high spirited and half-civilized”, and seemed “ill qualified” to demean themselves as British subjects.⁸⁰² The Corsicans were no longer perceived to be noble savages, but as half-civilised barbarians, who seemed “impatient of a foreign yoke in any shape”.⁸⁰³ The Corsicans had ‘rejected’ British rule, and therefore any attempts to civilize their manners. Therefore they were unworthy of British protection. The problems faced by the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom illustrated for the British newspapers, that Britain and Corsica were incompatible for union: there were too many fundamental differences between the two islands. The Corsican rebellions led many writers in England to turn their back on the Anglo-Corsican project. This in turn explained the lack of public reaction to the evacuation of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. The constant rebellions in the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom, made it harder for British ministerial writers to justify its existence. The Anglo-Corsican kingdom was never popular in England. It seemed that British intervention in Corsica came some 25 years too late to prompt any major public reaction within Britain. The Corsican issue was at its most popular in Britain in 1768, when the French first invaded the island. The Anglo-Corsican kingdom, on the other hand, was a government scheme, conducted in the midst of a large-scale war against the French republic. Corsica seemed insignificant within the major strategic considerations of the war against France.

⁸⁰⁰ *Star*, 19 October, 1795; Issue 2237.

⁸⁰¹ *General Evening Post*, (London, England), 23-25 February 1796; Issue 7984.

⁸⁰² *General Evening Post*, 23-25 February 1796.

⁸⁰³ *General Evening Post*, 23-25 February 1796.

Elliot, Paoli and the contentious office of Viceroy: June 1794-October 1794

Sir Gilbert Elliot was heavily involved in the formation of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. The act of creating the Corsican parliament was presented to the king of Great Britain “through his excellency sir Gilbert Elliot, his commissary plenipotentiary in his name”.⁸⁰⁴ Already, Elliot was acting as the king’s representative. He was the only major civil representative in the Mediterranean, and therefore was considered to be the prime candidate for Viceroy. The other main candidate for the office of Viceroy was Paoli. Moray McLaren agrees with the opinion that it was “by an act of incredible folly not Paoli but Sir Gilbert Elliot was made Viceroy”.⁸⁰⁵ The character of Sir Gilbert Elliot has received much debate from his contemporaries and historians. McLaren describes Elliot as a “strong English colonizer”, despite the fact that he came from a class of Scottish landed gentry, which “had jumped upon the English establishment bandwagon after the union of the Scottish and English parliaments of 1707”.⁸⁰⁶ Elliot certainly did make assertions of English greatness over the Corsicans. In one such instance, he stated that the Corsican nobility do not “set beyond the pitch of a good yeoman in England”.⁸⁰⁷ On the other hand, Elliot, in a letter to Dundas, described the “honoured virtues” of the Corsican people for rejecting the “poisonous and counterfeit liberty of France”.⁸⁰⁸ Elliot feared and hated the French revolution, as did many in England. To call Elliot an ‘English colonizer’ is an over simplification of his character. For sure, Elliot did believe in “his majesty’s princely virtues, and the exalted reputation enjoyed throughout the world by the British nation for every honourable and generous quality”.⁸⁰⁹ He certainly was a proponent of British constitutionalism. In this respect, however, he was no different from many of the British establishment figures during the late eighteenth century.

Elliot divided opinion amongst his contemporaries. On the one hand, Nelson believed that Elliot would provide “mild administration” to Corsica. If the Corsicans did not unite under Elliot, “they will not deserve to be so”.⁸¹⁰ Nelson became a good friend of

⁸⁰⁴*The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 108.

⁸⁰⁵Moran McLaren, *Corsica Boswell*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1966), 208.

⁸⁰⁶McLaren, *Corsica Boswell*, 208.

⁸⁰⁷Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 306.

⁸⁰⁸*The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 97.

⁸⁰⁹*The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 97.

⁸¹⁰Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. I, 493.

Elliot's during their time together in Corsica, and kept in constant contact with Elliot during his time in the Mediterranean. On the other hand, Sir John Moore suspected Elliot to be "a very unwise man, with a considerable share of ingenuity and art".⁸¹¹ Moore and Elliot generally disliked each other, which stemmed from the Viceroy's difficult relations with the military on Corsica. Attitudes towards Elliot were very much divided amongst contemporaries by those who supported him, whereas others despised him. I will let the reader conclude whether Elliot was the right person to be the Viceroy of Corsica. I will attempt to provide a picture of Elliot through the decisions he made during his time as Viceroy of Corsica: only then can a conclusion be made about his character and temperament as Viceroy of Corsica.

Elliot certainly desired to be Viceroy of Corsica. In a letter to the Duke of Portland, dated 7 August 1794, Elliot noted the surrender of Calvi to British forces, signalling the end of military operations in Corsica. Elliot noted that the annexation of Corsica was suspended, "until the nomination of a Viceroy could be made by his majesty".⁸¹² The civil affairs of the island had been suspended since 19 June. A provisional government under Paoli's party had been in control of the island since. Elliot believed it desirable to "transmit" the provisional powers to the executive government in his majesty's name, as soon as possible, due to the "inconveniences of an interregnum".⁸¹³ The current functions of government on Corsica were exercised by persons proper for subordinate office, but "very indifferently qualified to exercise supreme authority".⁸¹⁴ Moore, normally a critic of Elliot, agreed with him on the issue of the provisional government, and wrote that the "creatures" of Paoli were "a set of vulgar, low-minded men without talent".⁸¹⁵ The country was already dissatisfied with the provisional government, and looked "with impatience for the return of the dispatches from England, and the organisation of the new government".⁸¹⁶ Elliot believed that the provisional government acted more in the "vindictive spirit of an inflamed and triumphant party, than in the conciliating temper of a new government".⁸¹⁷ The British

⁸¹¹ Moore, *Diary*, 127.

⁸¹² FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland 7 August 1794.

⁸¹³ FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland 7 August 1794.

⁸¹⁴ FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland 7 August 1794.

⁸¹⁵ Moore, *Diary*, 122.

⁸¹⁶ Moore, *Diary*, 122.

⁸¹⁷ FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland 7 August 1794.

government always had Elliot as their first choice for Viceroy. In fact, the bad opinion formed of Paoli's provisional government played against his attempt to be Viceroy, an office he "certainly indulged himself in some expectation" of gaining.⁸¹⁸ Elliot on the other hand attempted to be a 'moderate force' against the 'vindictive' character of the provisional government.

The ministry agreed that Elliot was the best choice as Viceroy. The Duke of Portland, in a letter to the King, dated 22 August 1794, noted "the moderation, the prudence, the judgement and general ability which Sir Gilbert Elliot has manifested in the situation equally new and important in which your majesty was pleased to place him".⁸¹⁹

Portland acknowledged the role played by Paoli, and suggested to the king that he be enabled to pass "the remainder of his days in ease".⁸²⁰ In a mark of respect, Portland suggested that the king should present Paoli a "picture of your majesty set round with diamonds" as a "visible mark of you appreciation of his latter services".⁸²¹ This mark of respect was a way of appeasing Paoli, in their decision to appoint Elliot as the Viceroy. Also, Portland was of the understanding that Paoli indeed planned to retire due to his age and infirmities. In a reply to Portland a day later, the king would "entirely coincide in the opinion of the Duke of Portland that Sir Gilbert Elliot is the properest [sic] person" as Viceroy.⁸²² Elliot's many letters to the ministry revealed his frustrations in the delay of his appointment as Viceroy. It took nearly a month for messages to be carried from Corsica to England on ship. Communication was an issue that would plague the existence of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. In an interesting side note, the Anglo-Corsican kingdom was most likely assigned a Viceroy due to its distance to Britain. The Viceroy acted as the representative of the king, who was able to make the majority of Corsica's executive decisions without interference from Westminster. This was one of the fundamental differences between Corsica and Ireland. Ireland was located far closer to England itself; therefore executive decisions from Westminster to Ireland could travel relatively quicker than those to Corsica.

818 FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland 7th August 1794.

819 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, 232.

820 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, 232.

821 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, 232.

822 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, 233.

The Viceroy Elliot, and his problems with the military October 1794-January 1795

On the 1 October 1794, Elliot finally received dispatches “authorising inauguration of a Vice-royal government in Corsica”.⁸²³ However, as Moore noted in his *Diary*, the commission had not yet come. The dispatches from Portland only desired Elliot to take upon himself the office of Viceroy. Moore noted that this delay was due to the difficulties that had occurred “with regard to the powers to be given to the Viceroy”.⁸²⁴ Moore received this information from General Charles Stuart (1753-1801), his commanding officer. Stuart, the Commander-in-Chief of Britain’s Mediterranean forces, was the cause of the first major problem for the newly inaugurated Elliot. Stuart himself was a conflicting character. On the one hand, Moore considered him to be the perfect soldier. In his unabashed praise, Moore believed that “never had a general gained more deservedly the affection and confidence of his troops”.⁸²⁵ Moore’s opinion of Stuart was set during the siege of Calvi, when “by his able conduct”, he made himself master of a very strong post.⁸²⁶ Stuart was certainly a capable military officer, and the most competent man to hold the post of Commander-in-Chief during the entire existence of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. However, Moore was particularly biased in his praise of Stuart and his vilification of Elliot. There was another side to Stuart, as indicated in George III’s own correspondence. Henry Dundas first informed the king of Stuart’s appointment as Lieutenant-General in Corsica on the 23 April 1794. The king, in his reply trusted that Mr Dundas would not fail “to hint to Stuart the necessity of keeping up harmony with the commander of the fleet” Admiral Hood.⁸²⁷ George III knew that “Stuart is a zealous and active officer but not wanting of high feelings, therefore a little caution recommended may avoid future trouble”.⁸²⁸ Stuart was someone who seemed to quarrel with his equals, particularly naval officers. There was a certain tension and rivalry between British military and Naval services, as highlighted by their lack of co-operation during the siege of Bastia.⁸²⁹ As George III noted, “Elliot seems to have some weight with Lord Hood, by that means to cultivate

823 Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 276.

824 Moore, *Diary*, 123.

825 Moore, *Diary*, 131.

826 Moore, *Diary*, 115.

827 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, 198.

828 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, 199.

829 See Nelson’s *Dispatches*, vol. I, 380-396.

that desirable object”.⁸³⁰ Elliot was able to work with the navy far better than with the military, as seen from his correspondence with Nelson. This may have played a part in both Stuart and Moore’s dislike of Elliot. Dundas later informed the king that he “had talked very seriously to major General Stuart on the necessity of cordial cooperation between the different branches of your majesty’s services”.⁸³¹ Stuart was clearly a difficult man to work with, especially for his superiors. George III had more foresight than any of his contemporaries in predicting the future troubles that would arise with Stuart’s appointment.

Stuart’s main issue with Elliot concerned the powers of the Viceroy over the military forces in Corsica. Moore recorded a conversation where Stuart informed Elliot, that “you have no authority whatever over the army”.⁸³² Stuart made it clear to Elliot that “my commission is not only to command the troops in Corsica, but to be the commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean”.⁸³³ Stuart advised Elliot “never to interfere with the army till such time as your powers are explained to you by your commission”.⁸³⁴ This conversation highlighted the problems created by uncertain powers and limits of the office of Viceroy. Stuart asserted that only martial law existed on the island. Moore believed that the office of ‘Viceroy’ “had not originated with the Corsicans”, but rather at Elliot’s instigation.⁸³⁵ In Moore’s opinion, “I find many sensible people of opinion that a military government is the only proper one for Corsica at present”.⁸³⁶ The war against France required the fullest attention; only a military government could ensure law and order in Corsica. A military government, however, was only a short term solution: it did not provide any sureties for any future bond between Britain and Corsica. A civil government was necessary to highlight Britain’s commitment to Corsica, and provided certainties over its future; namely a permanent union with Britain. Stuart and Moore’s opposition to Elliot may have stemmed from the belief that Corsica should have been subjected to a military government.

830 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, 198.

831 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, 199.

832 Moore, *Diary*, 123.

833 Moore, *Diary*, 123.

834 Moore, *Diary*, 123.

835 Moore, *Diary*, 124.

836 Moore, *Diary*, 121.

One of the main promises contained within the Anglo-Corsican constitution, was that George III “has the exclusive direction of all military arrangements, and is to provide for the internal and external security of the country”.⁸³⁷ Britain’s authority was based upon their ability to defend the island from foreign threats, namely that of France. The wartime situation was the single most important factor during the entire existence of the Anglo-Corsican kingdom. The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was forged (and fell) during the French Revolutionary wars. This context directly influenced the internal situation of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. Therefore, it was Britain’s duty to provide for the defence of the island, for which a Corsican militia needed to be raised: in a letter to the Duke of Portland, Elliot expressed his belief that the aid of a Corsican militia for the regular troops “is indispensable for the defence of the island”.⁸³⁸ This was due to the fact that there were only some 1000 British troops on Corsica.⁸³⁹

In fact, the number of British troops never amounted to more than 1000 men during the entire existence of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. Elliot would later complain in a letter to William Windham (1750-1810), dated April 2 1795, that “undoubtedly...the number of British [troops] now in Corsica is much too small, even on the supposition of foreign corps being made effective in any reasonable time”.⁸⁴⁰ William Windham was Secretary at War for Pitt’s government from 1794 till 1801. Elliot informed his friend Windham that three foreign corps had been agreed to be sent to Corsica, although he would have “preferred British troops”.⁸⁴¹ These foreign corps were to be mostly made up of French or Italians emigrants, and were of questionable quality. Therefore, Elliot placed his hope in raising a Corsican militia. With his overblown optimism that was the typical style of his many letters, Elliot claimed to Portland that every man in Corsica was accustomed to the use of arms, and therefore he “cannot doubt of their contributing very essentially to the military force and defence of the island”.⁸⁴² Elliot’s bursting optimism within his letters usually clouded the realities of the situation. He

⁸³⁷ *The Annual Register, for the Year 1794*, 106.

⁸³⁸ FO 20/7, Elliot to Portland, 25 November 1794.

⁸³⁹ FO 20/7, Elliot to Portland, 25 November 1794.

⁸⁴⁰ *The Windham Papers: the Life and Correspondence of the Rt. Hon William Windham 1750-1810*, vol. I, (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1913), 293.

⁸⁴¹ *The Windham Papers*, vol. I 289.

⁸⁴² FO 20/7, Elliot to Portland, 25 November 1794.

mentioned to Portland that “we have as yet no regular returns” from the recruitment officers for the militia.⁸⁴³ As previously noted by Moore and Nelson, the Corsican soldiers were ill suited to be professional soldiers of the line. The lack of returns suggested that a militia was generally unpopular with the Corsican people, with only 600 men gathered instead of the 2000 hoped for.⁸⁴⁴ Any perceived inadequacies in Britain’s defence of Corsica would be seen as a sign of weakness by the Corsican people: if Britain was unable to visibly defend the island from the French threat, their authority on the island would collapse. Britain had promised to be a protector of the island. How could this be effectively achieved with only 1000 effective British troops on the island?

Elliot’s raising of a Corsican militia undermined the position of Stuart, the Commander-in-Chief. Moore complained that Elliot had already named the principal officers, merely to enhance his own patronage. Elliot used the corps merely “as a means of forwarding political views”.⁸⁴⁵ Elliot was able to assert his authority due to the fact that his commission as Viceroy of Corsica had finally arrived by January 1795. Why was there such a delay? George III’s correspondence reveals the answer. In a letter to the king dated 1 November 1794, the Duke of Portland revealed that the law servants claimed it was beyond their authority to “bestow upon the appointment” of Elliot as Viceroy.⁸⁴⁶ The office of Viceroy implied a role higher than that practised by the Lord Lieutenant in Ireland. Therefore the Lord Chancellor, after long deliberation, was of the opinion that the appointment of the Viceroy of Corsica was not to be made under the great seal, “but by virtue of your majesty’s sign manual only”.⁸⁴⁷ The Viceroy was to be appointed directly by the king. This actually made the office of Viceroy superior than that of a governor; he was subject only to the King himself. If the Viceroy could maintain the confidence of the King and his ministers, he would be able to stay in office. The crown lawyers were the main reason for the delay in sending the commission. This was caused by the uncertainties surrounding the unique powers granted to such an office. However, as the Duke of Portland noted, this delay had

843 FO 20/7, Elliot to Portland, 25 November 1794.

844 FO 20/7, Elliot to Portland, 25 November 1794.

845 Moore, *Diary*, 126.

846 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, 259.

847 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, 259.

caused great “anxiety and impatience” among Paoli and the Corsicans of all descriptions, as well as the apprehensions of Elliot himself.⁸⁴⁸ The commission was sent in November and did not arrive until December 1794. This was one of the first instances to showcase the incompetency of the British ministry regarding Corsica. Due to the great distance over which communications had to be made, the ministers were painfully unaware of problems created by the delay. For the Earl of Charlemont, this episode highlighted the inadequacies of the “present detested administration”.⁸⁴⁹ Charlemont, writing on 29 October, questioned why there was such an “impolitic delay of measures” in sending the commission of Viceroy.⁸⁵⁰ The ministry’s actions regarding the commission of the Viceroy bordered upon incompetency.

Elliot’s appointment as Viceroy was not universally applauded. As Moore revealed, in January 1795, when the powers of the Viceroy over the military were revealed, General Stuart immediately resigned his commission. Stuart was of the opinion that when the King invested Elliot as the Viceroy of Corsica “with the command of the British army, the Lieutenant-General’s power over it ceases from this instant”.⁸⁵¹ Stuart’s resignation revealed the problems caused by the powers entrusted to the Viceroy. Whether Elliot was the right choice to make decisions regarding the military in Corsica was questionable, considering his lack of military background. In the context of the French revolutionary wars, this seemed to be a bad decision. However, it was also clear that Stuart’s resignation was not only due the power of the Viceroy over the military. After all, a civilian parliament at Westminster was in charge of the British ministry. The fact was that Stuart loathed Elliot. Stuart was an impulsive character who found it difficult at the best of times to get on with his superiors. It was no surprise that he decided to resign when he learnt that Elliot would be superior in command to himself. General Stuart would continue to cause problems for Elliot in England after his return from Corsica. In a later letter sent to Elliot in August 1795, Portland attempted to calm Elliot’s apprehensions, stating that he had “never seen or heard from the General (Stuart) since his return from Corsica”.⁸⁵² Elliot’s letters asking of Stuart’s

848 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, 259.

849 Caulfeild, *Correspondence of Earl of Charlemont*, 251.

850 Caulfeild, *Correspondence of Earl of Charlemont*, 251.

851 Moore, *Diary*, 132.

852 FO 20/8 Portland to Elliot, August 1795.

actions in London bordered upon paranoia. Portland also confirmed to Elliot in the same letter that he was entrusted with authority for the “maintenance of subordination and obedience in all the Corsican corps”.⁸⁵³ Moore believed that the government “will find out perhaps too late how much they have allowed themselves to be committed from the confidence they have reposed in the good sense and moderation of Sir Gilbert”; qualities which “perhaps he does not possess in so great a degree as is imagined”.⁸⁵⁴ Moore was clearly biased against Elliot as a supporter of General Stuart. Nevertheless, question marks had been raised in some quarters over the adequacy of Elliot as Viceroy of Corsica. However, as was seen in the delay of the commission as Viceroy, the British government was also at fault in causing the many problems accompanying the early days of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. These uncertain beginnings did not provide hope for the future.

The First Anglo-Corsican Parliament, and the problems with Paoli: 1795

During the rule of the provisional government, Paoli and Elliot slowly drifted apart. In his letter to Portland, Elliot went as far as to wish for “Paoli’s total retreat from” Corsica, which “would be a desirable, if not almost necessary thing”.⁸⁵⁵ Elliot clearly feared Paoli’s influence within Corsica. These matters came to a head during the first Anglo-Corsican parliament in February 1795. Originally, the parliament had planned to meet at Corte on the 6 February. However, as Elliot informed Portland, due to the severity of winter at Corte, he decided to convoke the parliament at Bastia instead.⁸⁵⁶ Elliot also implied, however, in a secret dispatch to Portland, that he moved the parliament from Corte to Bastia in order to escape Paoli’s influence.⁸⁵⁷ Paoli still had a wide range of supporters in the centre of the island, where Corte is situated. On 10 February, Paoli was elected as president to the chamber. For Elliot, this was an untenable situation. In Elliot’s opinion, Paoli as president of the chamber of parliament, “is in effect king of Corsica, and that all British authority in this country disappears from that moment”.⁸⁵⁸ How well founded were Elliot’s fears of Paoli’s power and authority? As Moore noted, Paoli was certainly “extremely popular in

⁸⁵³ FO 20/8, Portland to Elliot, August 1795.

⁸⁵⁴ Moore, *Diary*, 124.

⁸⁵⁵ FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland 7 August 1794.

⁸⁵⁶ FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland, Dispatch 55, 18 February 1795.

⁸⁵⁷ FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland, secret dispatch, 19 February 1795.

⁸⁵⁸ FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland, 19 February 1795.

Corsica, and has a considerable party in the parliament attached to him”.⁸⁵⁹ Paoli’s main contact Galeazzi for example was a member of the Corsican parliament. Paoli’s letters reveal that many Corsicans still looked to Paoli as a figure of authority. Paoli had to remind Mr Guglielmi, a member of the Bastia Parliament, that “the distribution of seats does not depend on me, who am a simple citizen; but it is up to the Viceroy”.⁸⁶⁰ Paoli refused the position as president, due to his “age” and “painful ailments” which did not allow him to make the constant trips to and from Parliament.⁸⁶¹ Elliot claimed that Paoli espoused democratic principles, which were not compatible with legal constitutional monarchy.⁸⁶²

Paoli’s own letters, however, completely refute Elliot’s claims. Rather than a man who espoused the democratic principles of the French revolution, any reader would find Paoli an advocate of the British constitutional system, as can be seen in a letter he wrote to his friend Galeazzi, in which he stated that “the hundred years of the Roman Republic can not boast such glory as the hundred years of the last English Revolution”.⁸⁶³ Paoli was a known admirer of the Roman Republic: for him to describe the English system since the Glorious Revolution of 1688 as greater than Rome was high praise indeed. Elliot claimed that he knew what Paoli was really like; clearly he did not. The length of Elliot’s letter to Portland suggested that Elliot’s fear of Paoli bordered upon obsession, or paranoia. Elliot claimed that the length of the dispatch was due to the necessity for Portland to know all the details of the political situation.⁸⁶⁴ Elliot ultimately feared that Paoli’s great authority in the island could cause “mischief” for the Anglo-Corsican regime, although, at this moment in time, Elliot believed that Paoli’s presence in Corsica was not currently a “serious or insurmountable evil”.⁸⁶⁵ Elliot concluded that he must be seen as “clearly and strongly supported at home, and I must have the means of countering the insinuations which either Paoli, or any other persons might attempt to profit by my losing the confidence of his majesty and his

⁸⁵⁹ Moore, *Diary*, 136.

⁸⁶⁰ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 521.

⁸⁶¹ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 510.

⁸⁶² FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland, 19 February 1795.

⁸⁶³ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 484.

⁸⁶⁴ FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland, 19 February 1795.

⁸⁶⁵ FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland, 19 February 1795.

ministers”.⁸⁶⁶ Elliot clearly felt insecure in his position as Viceroy, which in part explains his seemingly paranoid fear of Paoli. British rule in Corsica seemed based upon unstable foundations: the Viceroy was entirely reliant upon being seen to be strongly supported by the British government at home.

How then did Elliot attempt to govern a pro-Paolist parliament? The simple answer is cash. Elliot made it clear during the session of the first Corsican parliament, that “opposition to government is inconsistent with the enjoyment of its favours”.⁸⁶⁷ British money enabled the Viceroy to win the support and favours of the majority of the members of parliament. MPs who supported the government would receive “signal marks of favour, or daily solicit them”.⁸⁶⁸ Elliot confidently asserted that “the business of parliament has hitherto been conducted with as much tranquillity, and as little difference in opinion, as could be expected in any assembly of a popular nature”.⁸⁶⁹ He believed that the opposition consisted of only some 20-25 members, which was daily falling off.⁸⁷⁰ Elliot was promoting an oligarchical government, centred around the Viceroy, rather than a ‘popular assembly’ based upon the British system. The British parliament, whatever its flaws, usually consisted of a government and a sizeable opposition. This enabled debates and differing opinions to emerge. Elliot seemed adverse to allowing any form of legal opposition to his Anglo-Corsican government: thus his government could be characterised as authoritarian rather than parliamentary. Elliot’s attempt to curb any opposition to his rule was also due to the context of the French Revolutionary wars. Elliot believed that Corsica should at this “trying period” set an “example of constancy and firmness which might make greater nations blush, for” she was “threatened” by “an exasperated and triumphant enemy, which Europe combined has not been able to stem”.⁸⁷¹ Elliot feared and loathed the French revolution, so any form of opposition or discontent in Corsica became identified with French revolutionary ideals: the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom thus became a place of fear and corruption.

866 FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland, 19 February 1795.

867 FO 20/7, Elliot to Portland, no. 57, 3 April 1795.

868 FO 20/7, Elliot to Portland, 3 April 1795.

869 FO 20/7, Elliot to Portland, 3 April 1795.

870 FO 20/7, Elliot to Portland, 3 April 1795.

871 FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland, 19 February 1795.

Elliot used government favours to create his own political party. The most prominent member was the young inspiring Corsican, Pozzo di Borgo. Di Borgo (1764-1842) was a controversial figure in the history of the Anglo-Corsican kingdom. He became a bitter enemy of the Bonapartes and played a major role in their expulsion from Corsica. He was also one of Paoli's most important assistants after his return to the island. However, Paoli and Di Borgo soon fell out, especially when Di Borgo became firmly identified with Elliot's party. He was elected president of the council of state during the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. He would later serve at the Court of Russia, during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815). Moore claimed that "Sir Gilbert is supposed to be much influenced by Pozzo di Borgo, who is universally disliked and generally thought to be a scoundrel".⁸⁷² Moore was a hostile writer of both Elliot and Di Borgo. However, as Lady Elliot revealed, Di Borgo was Sir Gilbert's "prime favourite".⁸⁷³ Di Borgo did not have a large political following like Paoli, and was entirely reliant upon the support provided by the Viceroy. Therefore, he was generally disliked by the majority of Corsicans. This was most evident during the controversy surrounding the bust of Paoli. The controversy began during Elliot's tour of the island from June to July 1795. During Elliot's stay in Ajaccio, he was given a ball at the Hall of Municipality by Colonel Colonna's battalion. Colonel Colonna was an aide-de-camp of the Viceroy. Various reports have been written over what transpired. Moore claimed that Colonna, in a drunken stupor, took down Paoli's bust in the main hall, stabbed it several times, and then threw it into a closet.⁸⁷⁴ The bust was quickly replaced. The event made much noise in the town, and eventually the news spread across the island, being the "subject of conversation and correspondence for a fortnight".⁸⁷⁵ The event may seem trivial, but for many Corsicans the destruction of Paoli's bust was considered to be a severe affront to their beloved former leader and "to the whole people of Corsica".⁸⁷⁶

How did Paoli react to the defacing of his bust? His response was made very clear; "a small fire was caused by the spark".⁸⁷⁷ The defaced torso was the catalyst of the

⁸⁷² Moore, *Diary*, 121.

⁸⁷³ Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 295.

⁸⁷⁴ Moore, *Diary*, 159.

⁸⁷⁵ Moore, *Diary*, 159.

⁸⁷⁶ Moore, *Diary*, 159-160.

⁸⁷⁷ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 529.

rebellions and protests which followed. Paoli had been disgruntled with Elliot's government for several months. His frustrations were mainly directed against the apparent lack of defences provided by the British government for the island. In a letter to his friend Galeazzi, Paoli believe that "the only fleet cannot defend ourselves"; despite the British navy's superiority in value and discipline to the enemy, "it can not be everywhere; and it never will so effectively surround the island".⁸⁷⁸ Paoli was an admirer of the British navy and praised its skill and strength. However, it was the dismal conditions of the military on the island which concerned Paoli most of all. Paoli did not believed that the Viceroy saw "our state, as we see it".⁸⁷⁹ Paoli began to separate himself from the policies of the Viceroy. However, Paoli did not blame Elliot himself for the problems engulfing the island. Rather, it was the other 'directors' who "had the art of keeping out by the Viceroy all the people who can enlighten him about the state of things".⁸⁸⁰ Paoli's anger was mainly directed towards Di Borgo, who led the Viceroy to all kind of "extremes".⁸⁸¹ After Paoli's bust had been desecrated, the General became far more open in his opposition to the government. However, it was clear that Paoli's main grievance was against Di Borgo, who "was preferred to many honest patriots" for promotion.⁸⁸² Promotion to higher office was meant to be based upon merit and reward. What was clear of the government, under the effective control of Di Borgo, was their ability to "give employments and take them off to whoever" they wanted.⁸⁸³ Paoli compared the Viceroy's government to the autocratic system practised at Constantinople.⁸⁸⁴ The Anglo-Corsican government was autocratic in nature, rather than an example of constitutional monarchy. This autocracy was allowed to subsist because of the apparent lack of legal opposition against the Viceroy's government. As discussed previously, the Anglo-Corsican government under Elliot rewarded those who supported their policies. These policies seemed to be the complete opposite of what was promised in the Anglo-Corsican constitution.

878 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 523.

879 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 523.

880 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 523.

881 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 529.

882 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 524.

883 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 530.

884 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 530.

The insurrections which plagued Corsica in the summer of 1795 was the first major challenge for the Anglo-Corsican government. Portland claimed that the ministry learnt with astonishment and concern “the designs which have been formed for rendering the inhabitants dissatisfied with their new constitution”.⁸⁸⁵ Were the insurrections against the new Anglo-Corsican constitution? Elliot informed Portland in a dispatch dated the 16 August 1795, that the majority of petitions brought to parliament were about taxes. One of the petitioners refused to “pay taxes”, and demanded “that a supply of money should be paid to them”.⁸⁸⁶ Another petitioner claimed that “they did not mean to pay taxes; that they fought for that and were ready to fight for it”.⁸⁸⁷ The main cause of discontent among Corsicans throughout the short history of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was taxation. The tumultuous history of Corsica throughout the eighteenth century meant that no government had been truly established on the island. Tax collection therefore had been lax, especially under the French regime, who were determined not to exacerbate tensions in their recent conquest. The Corsicans were not used to paying taxes, and generally resented their imposition. Taxes however were essential to the defence of the island. It was a catch 22 moment; many Corsicans complained of the poor public defences of the island, yet refused to pay taxes which could help maintain better public defences for the island. Many of the petitions had no real political agenda behind them. The one major figure which united any opposition against the Viceroy’s government was General Paoli.

Elliot claimed that the discord which plagued Corsica in the summer of 1795 was “instigated by General Paoli”.⁸⁸⁸ Paoli certainly was a figure-head for all the insurrections. He was able to direct the insurrections into opposition against Elliot’s government. However, Paoli was clear that he was “determined to defend, and attack, but with legal action”.⁸⁸⁹ In a letter to Galeazzi dated 22 August 1795, Paoli wrote that he believed that Elliot felt all the discontent in the island was directed at “the constitution, and our connection with the British”.⁸⁹⁰ Paoli claimed, however, that he was primarily opposed to the subjection of the country to “the despotism of miserable

⁸⁸⁵ FO 20/8, Portland to Elliot, August 1795.

⁸⁸⁶ FO 20/8, Elliot to Portland, Secret and confidential, 16 August 1795.

⁸⁸⁷ FO 20/8, Elliot to Portland, 16 August 1795.

⁸⁸⁸ FO 20/8, Elliot to Portland, 16 August 1795.

⁸⁸⁹ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 530.

⁸⁹⁰ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 541.

favourites”; namely Di Borgo.⁸⁹¹ It was clear from all of Paoli’s letters that he was not opposed directly to the Viceroy, but his advisers who had ‘corrupted’ him. The main problem with the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was its inability to deal with opposition of any kind. Paoli noted that “legal resistance would be applauded in England”.⁸⁹² The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was meant to be a constitutional parliamentary system, but any opposition against the government was construed to be an insurrection against the British system. British constitutional government was believed to be the most superior in the world: any rebellion of any form, whatever its motivations, was seen to be a rejection of that system.

However, what also has to be noted is that these insurrections came during a wartime situation. As Portland noted to Elliot, the insurrections endangered “the security” of the island, which could cause problems for Britain’s position in the Mediterranean. Perhaps the most dangerous element of the insurrections was Elliot’s claim that Paoli was seconded by an “English party”.⁸⁹³ In a letter to Galeazzi dated 15 August, Paoli noted that some British officers had the “potential of causing disorder”.⁸⁹⁴ The leader of these disgruntled British officers was none other than Colonel John Moore. Moore was clearly dissatisfied with Elliot’s regime. During the height of the insurrections against the Vice royal government, Moore and three other officers visited Paoli in his home at Rostino on 30 July 1795. The editor of Moore’s diary, Major-General Sir J.F. Maurice, admitted that Moore’s visit to Paoli was a “most rash act”, as it was in Moore’s interest to conciliate with Elliot.⁸⁹⁵ Moore, certainly an admirer of Paoli, became affiliated with his opposition against Elliot’s government: indeed, Moore believed that Elliot should have “governed through his [Paoli’s] influence”.⁸⁹⁶ It is hard to determine whether Moore and several British officers would have acted against Elliot’s government. However, the threat was considered great enough to force the British ministry into action. When Portland finally sent his response to Elliot in August 1795, he was clear that Colonel Moore should immediately quit the island in 48 hours,

⁸⁹¹ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 539.

⁸⁹² Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 543.

⁸⁹³ FO 20/8, Elliot to Portland, 16 August 1795.

⁸⁹⁴ Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 535.

⁸⁹⁵ Moore, *Diary*, 169.

⁸⁹⁶ Moore, *Diary*, 161.

and come directly to the king.⁸⁹⁷ Due to the delay in communications, the dispatches were not received by Elliot until October. Paoli was also ‘persuaded’ to leave Corsica for England, with the promise of a large pension. The insurrection highlighted the major inefficiencies of the Anglo-Corsican government, which was unable to deal effectively with any kind of opposition, and once again had had to rely upon the British ministry at Westminster to act in their favour.

Both Moore and Paoli left Corsica around the same time, in early October 1795. Paoli himself admitted that he left Corsica due to the fear that “the king would withdraw his troops” if the island was seen to be against Elliot’s government.⁸⁹⁸ Paoli’s and Moore’s departures ended the first major crisis of the Anglo-Corsican kingdom. Elliot was able to confidentially assert at the end of 1795 that British government rule was “firmly” established in Corsica and that the island was “capable of being governed under British authority”.⁸⁹⁹ Any minor disturbances that might break out on the island could be easily dealt with, so long as they were not excited by “some general and real grievance, or conducted and encouraged by some such leader [as Paoli]”.⁹⁰⁰ However, Moore believed that Paoli’s presence in Corsica “curbed his countrymen and prevented their acting with the violence to which they were inclined from their dislike to the Viceroy and his measures”.⁹⁰¹ Paoli was certainly a restraining influence on his fellow Corsicans, as illustrated by his desire only for legal action, and not violence. Would Paoli’s absence from Corsica be a blessing or a curse for the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom?

The British government and Corsica: 1795-1796

The actions/reactions of the British government concerning Corsica, were slow, ineffective and borderline incompetent. Elliot made it clear from his many dispatches to Portland that he must be seen to be strongly supported from the British government. However, Elliot did not receive a single dispatch (except from Windham) from the British ministry between March and August 1795. Why was this the case? It seems that

897 FO 20/8, Elliot to Portland, August 16 1795.

898 Paoli, *Lettere di Pasquale De Paoli*, 544.

899 FO 20/9, Elliot to Portland, 26 December 1795.

900 FO 20/9, Elliot to Portland, 26 December 1795.

901 Moore, *Diary*, 176.

the British ministry had to an extent lost interest of Corsica. The Prime Minister William Pitt in particular never seemed very interested in the conquest of Corsica. This was most evident in one of Pitt's famous war speeches, made to Parliament on the 9 December 1795, in which he defended Britain's record in the French revolutionary wars, which had thus far been "a scene of disasters and defeats, except in the instances of sea engagements".⁹⁰² The navy remained the pride and joy of the British armed forces. Pitt wanted each member of Parliament to observe "the three different points that we had gained in the present context; Martinique, Cape Nicholas mole, and the Cape of Good Hope; and then let him ask himself whether they were not the most important that could fall into our hands".⁹⁰³ Perhaps most significant was Corsica's omission from Pitt's list of 'important' conquests. Pitt himself desired peace with France. He believed that if there was an opportunity to negotiate for a general peace on just and suitable terms, then there would be an "earnest desire to give it the fullest and speediest effect".⁹⁰⁴

As indicated in Pitt's speech, the war had been progressing badly for Britain. The British army sent to the Low Countries had been shamefully humiliated in 1794 and the Dutch Republic had fallen to French forces in January 1795. In that same year, the coalition that had formed against France began to unravel. Prussia signed the treaty of Basel with France on 6 April. Perhaps most dangerous for Britain was Spain's peace treaty with France on 10 July 1795. Britain's alliance with Spain enabled Britain's fleet to freely roam the Mediterranean. The secret intentions of Spain would continually concern British policy makers. Sir John Jervis (1735-1823) was promoted to Admiral of the Mediterranean fleet on 1 May 1795. He wrote a series of observations on the operations of the British Mediterranean fleet, received by the First Lord of the Admiralty Earl Spencer (1758-1834) on the 6 October 1795. Even at this early juncture, Jervis believed that Spanish intentions could not be trusted. Any potential hostility from Spain against Britain, would require the British fleet to "quit the present position and proceed down the Mediterranean, measures must be taken respecting

902 William Pitt, *Orations on the French War to the Peace of Amiens*, by William Pitt, (London: J.M Dent, 1905), 128.

903 Pitt, *Orations on the French War*, 128.

904 *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England*, Vol XXXII May 27 1795-2 March 1797, (London: Printed by T.C Hamsard, 1818), 571.

Corsica, upon which some secret instructions may have been given”.⁹⁰⁵ Those ‘secret instructions’ undoubtedly meant the evacuation of Corsica. It was clear that Britain’s position in the Mediterranean would be untenable should Spain declare war upon Britain. What was also clear was the willingness of Britain to abandon their hard earned conquest. Why was this the case, when Corsica promised to be the greatest naval and commercial base in the Mediterranean?

During the course of the French Revolutionary Wars, Britain’s war debt greatly increased. William Morgan provided a rather pessimistic view of Britain’s prospective finances: he estimated that the Navy’s debt for 1796 would cost some £9,037,953.⁹⁰⁶ However, the figures he gave provide an insight into the costs undertaken by Britain during the war. A letter from the Duke of Portland to the king, dated 2 October 1795 reveals the difficulties accompanying “the present high price of corn”.⁹⁰⁷ This was another example of the financial issues faced by the British government. Britain also had to supply large subsidies to their continental allies, particularly Austria. Morgan estimated the cost of a loan to the Emperor at £7,205,133.⁹⁰⁸ The 10 June 1796 edition of the *Gazetteer* provided an ‘Estimate of additional demands for the current year’, which were to be the chief business of the new parliament.⁹⁰⁹ The estimates included expenses “To meet the mediated Armada” at £7,500,000, and £4,500,000 for a loan to the Emperor to recruit more Italian troops. In comparison, and surprisingly, the amount calculated to preserve Corsica was a mere £250,000.⁹¹⁰ This sum, however, would have to be supplied exclusively by the British government.

The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was unable to raise the money required for its own administration. Portland later complained to Elliot that the annual intake would not produce £10,000 per annum; “according to Mr Necker”, half of that sum was not paid in the time of the French government.⁹¹¹ Portland referenced Necker’s *A Treatise on*

905 *Private Papers of George, Second earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty 1794-1801*, vol. I, ed. Julian Corbett, (London: Navy records society, 1913), 56.

906 William Morgan, *Additional Facts, Addressed to the People of Great Britain, respecting the Expenses of the War, and the State of the National Debt*, (London: Printed for J. Debrett, 1796), 23.

907 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, 408.

908 Morgan, *Additional Facts*, 25.

909 *Gazetteer*, (London, England), 10 June 1796; Issue 21060.

910 *Gazetteer*, 10 June 1796.

911 Portland to Elliot, July 1796, Secret and confidential.

the Administration of the Finances of France (1784), which was published in three volumes. Jacques Necker (1734-1804) was Louis XVI's chief financial minister from 1777-1781 and again in 1789-1790. Necker played a crucial role in calling the estates-general in 1789, for the purpose of sorting out France's troubled finances. France during the 1780s suffered from many financial problems. Necker's *Treatise* contained the financial records of each of France's provinces, and was translated into English a year after its initial publication in French. Necker estimated that the annual income of Corsica was some 600,000 livres; in contrast the civil expenses alone cost some 250,000 livres.⁹¹² This latter sum did not include the military expenses incurred for maintaining troops on the island, which led Necker to conclude that it was due to "political considerations alone that the possession of Corsica is advantageous to France".⁹¹³ Portland bemoaned the fact that the Corsicans were 'exempt' from every expense attendant on their civil and military establishment, and they resisted any attempt "made to consent them to that change".⁹¹⁴ As previously mentioned, the Corsicans main grievance against the British government was paying taxes. The Anglo-Corsican administration was only operational due to British government money, and seemed incapable of being self-sufficient. This was even more of an issue during a wartime situation, when money was scarce.

Vice-Admiral Collingwood wrote to his friend J.E. Blackett that "the favourable reports which have been made of this island are shameful falsehoods, and show how blind people are to the truth, when it interferes with their interests, or checks their vanity".⁹¹⁵ Collingwood questioned the very ideas that had previously been forwarded to promote British intervention in Corsica. Clearly, many who served in Corsica were somewhat disappointed by the undeveloped nature of the island. Collingwood himself clearly hated Corsica. This is highlighted by his complaint that "Corsica produces nothing but wild hogs", and his belief that "none will lament the loss except those who have good appointments there".⁹¹⁶ Collingwood questioned the productivity of the

912 Jacques Necker, *A Treatise on the Administration of the Finances of France*, vol. 1, tr. Thomas Mortimer, (London: Logographic press, 1785), 320.

913 Necker, *A Treatise on the Finances of France*, 320.

914 Portland to Elliot, July 1796.

915 Cuthbert Collingwood, *A Selection from the Public and Private Correspondence of Vice-Admiral Lord Collingwood*, 4th ed. (New York: C.H Carvill, 1829), 37.

916 Collingwood, *Public and Private Correspondence*, 36.

island, which had been promised to contain so much potential by many contemporary writers. Collingwood's friend and fellow naval officer Horatio Nelson had previously been an advocate for British presence on Corsica. Nelson had claimed in 1795, that Corsica supplied large woods of olives, and "our naval yards will be supplied with excellent wood".⁹¹⁷ Indeed, many writers wrote of the excellent wood Corsica had which could be used to supply the British navy. The 20 August edition of the *Star* claimed that the French masted all their ships in the arsenal of Toulon with wood from Corsica.⁹¹⁸ Was this actually the case? Paul Bamford's book *Forests and French sea power* (1956) reveals that the majority of Corsica's assessable forests had been largely devastated by the local inhabitants and the lumbering operations of the Genoese. The most suitable trees that remained were "too distant from the sea", and "extensive river and road constructions were considered necessary preliminaries to any naval cuts".⁹¹⁹ When "exploitations finally did get under way during the war of American revolution" the "island provided enormous quantities of board and plank".⁹²⁰ However, the great French dockyard of Toulon was still dependent on foreign exports. During the later years of the Old regime, Toulon "used a few masts from Corsica, but became largely dependent on the masts from the Baltic and Black sea markets".⁹²¹ What can be gathered from the example provided by Corsica's timber, is that potential sources of wood were available. However, these were not easily accessible, and major investment was needed in order to exploit the forests properly.

Many of the British on the island were somewhat disappointed by the undeveloped nature of Corsica. Portland complained of the "poverty of the country", and that any "attempts of improvement" were rebuffed by the rebellious nature of the inhabitants.⁹²² Could the island have been developed by a committed British government? As previously stated, money was short, especially in a wartime situation. Even considering this, the British government's attempts to develop the island were certainly lacklustre: the British government seemed unwilling or generally uninterested in developing the

⁹¹⁷ Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. 2, 4.

⁹¹⁸ *Star*, 20 August 1795; Issue 2186.

⁹¹⁹ Paul Bamford, *Forests and French Sea Power 1660-1789*, (Toronto: Toronto university press, 1956), 106.

⁹²⁰ Bamford, *Forests and French Sea Power* 107.

⁹²¹ Bamford, *Forests and French Sea Power*, 129.

⁹²² Portland to Elliot, July 1796.

island. This attitude did not stem just from the disappointment over the undeveloped state of the island. As Collingwood concluded Corsica was “maintained at an immense expense, and it is ridiculous that it should be”.⁹²³ The government's money was wasted on providing appointments, and obtaining political influence in the island. For Collingwood, “neither the people nor the country [were] capable of being improved, nor does all the money that is lavished there give us any influence”.⁹²⁴ The Corsicans themselves were unable to improve, or adopt to the British system.

1796: The breaking of ‘bonds’ between Britain and Corsica

The British government's loss of interest in Corsica stemmed from two central causes. The first concerned the undeveloped nature of the island, as described within the previous section. The second was the belief that the inhabitants themselves were unable to adopt the British system. The rebellions in 1795 had raised doubts within Britain over the suitability of a union with Corsica. Events in 1796 would ultimately shatter the perceived bonds between Britain and Corsica. Two major rebellions broke out in Corsica in 1796. The first occurred in April at Bogognano. In May, troops were finally sent to Bogognano, only to find the village deserted; the inhabitants had fled to the mountains.⁹²⁵ However, the rebellion at Bogognano inspired an even greater threat to the existence of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. Elliot claimed that “the disaster in Piedmont...the retreat of the Austrians” had increased security risks, and therefore the possibility of a French invasion.⁹²⁶ Events in Italy had certainly emboldened the “Republican Party”, of “promoting troubles” in Corsica.⁹²⁷ What was clear was that there was a French ‘Republican Party’, which had slowly been building in strength in Corsica. Nelson also noted of the existence of a large republican party in the island, “which take every opportunity of making disturbances”.⁹²⁸ The war had been progressing badly for Britain and their allies in 1796. The young Corsican Napoleon Bonaparte had been made commander of the French armies in Italy. In an extraordinary campaign, he had beaten the Austrian armies in nearly every engagement. The vast majority of Austrian troops in Italy were shut up in the siege of

⁹²³ Collingwood, *Public and Private Correspondence*, 36.

⁹²⁴ Collingwood, *Public and Private Correspondence*, 36.

⁹²⁵ FO 20/11, Elliot to Portland, 5 June 1796.

⁹²⁶ FO 20/11, Elliot to Portland, 5 June 1796.

⁹²⁷ FO 20/11, Elliot to Portland, 5 June 1796.

⁹²⁸ Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. 2, 187.

Mantua. Elliot believed that the ‘great disadvantage’ “under which we now labour is the progress of French arms in Italy”.⁹²⁹ The population of Corsica was “not unnaturally impressed by the wonderful triumphs of the French armies under a Corsican leader”.⁹³⁰

The second major rebellion in Corsica occurred in May, when Elliot was intercepted by a Corsican group, who numbered some 700 to 800.⁹³¹ The ‘Campo’ as they called themselves were headed and brought together by two or three republicans. Elliot however maintained that the Republican party was still “too weak to avow their intentions”.⁹³² The main grievances of the ‘Campo’ were their jealousy against individuals in chief employments, namely Di Borgo, and “the pretence of taxes” under which they had been “brought together”, which Elliot felt was the “only object that could really interest them”.⁹³³ Elliot believed that it would have been easy to break up the ‘Campo’ with the troops he had with him. However, Elliot sternly believed that the British occupation of Corsica was reliant upon the “cordial co-operation of the people with the authorities”.⁹³⁴ It would be “absurd and unwarrantable” to maintain the government by force; Britain was not able “nor should we desire to conquer Corsica”.⁹³⁵ Britain’s intention was never to ‘conquer’ Corsica through force of arms, but to assimilate the island into the British empire. Any force would inevitably lead to civil war, which would be disastrous for the Anglo-Corsican government, especially considering the small number of British troops on the island. Therefore, Elliot acquiesced to the grievances of the ‘Campo’, which included the resignation of those persons who were “known to be the real objects of jealousy”.⁹³⁶ Di Borgo was among the number to be forced to resign.

Elliot’s acceptance of all the grievances presented by the ‘Campo’ was a considerable sign of weakness from the Anglo-Corsican government. Perhaps most contradictory

929 Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 343.

930 Elliot, *Life and letters*, 343.

931 FO 20/11, Elliot to Portland, 5 June 1796.

932 FO 20/11, Elliot to Portland, 5 June 1796.

933 FO 20/11, Elliot to Portland, 5 June 1796.

934 Elliot, *Life and letters*, 339.

935 Elliot, *Life and letters*, 340.

936 FO 20/11, Elliot to Portland, 5 June 1796.

was Elliot's sudden acceptance of Di Borgo's resignation, when he had ignored the many calls in the previous year for him to leave office. Elliot's own conduct was criticised by Portland, who did not believe that the British government should be "permanently charged with the expenses of the Corsican government, or that Corsica should be exempt from such taxes" necessary to their administration.⁹³⁷ Elliot's character had been previously brought into question by the British government. During the period concerning Paoli's and Moore's expulsions from Corsica, the king was "sorry to see in all Sir Gilbert Elliot's letters a degree of jealousy that I had hoped had not been a part of his character".⁹³⁸ Moore, on his return to England, revealed that "Sir Gilbert's character is not altogether unknown in this country".⁹³⁹ Elliot's enemies in England, Moore and General Stuart both spoke against his conduct in Corsica. Elliot himself informed his friend William Windham that all his views and wishes "point strongly homewards and I think myself entitled to be relieved".⁹⁴⁰ Elliot saw his mission as the preparation of the constitution "to see the measure fairly launched and floating with a favourable breeze, and then resign the helm".⁹⁴¹ Elliot's commitment to Corsica was questionable and he desired to return to England. He seemed personally drained by the role of Viceroy: a replacement may have been the best course of action for the future of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. Elliot admitted that Frederick North, secretary of state in Corsica, "would carry on the business here perfectly well".⁹⁴² Frederick North (1766-1827) was the younger son and namesake of the former Prime Minister Lord North (1732-1792). He also served as a diplomat to Rome. Perhaps North would have been a more suitable Viceroy than Elliot.

The rebellions that plagued Corsica in 1796 were for Portland sufficient evidence, that the Corsicans had rejected the "generosity and liberality of the English".⁹⁴³ Britain believed that their parliamentary government was the best in the world: any revolt against the Anglo-Corsican government was construed to be a rejection of the British system itself. For Nelson, "how far the conduct of those islanders, taken in a grand

937 FO 20/11, Portland to Elliot, July 1796.

938 *The Later Correspondence of George III*, vol. II, 396.

939 Moore, *Diary*, 180.

940 *The Windham Papers*, vol. II, 305.

941 Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 238.

942 *The Windham Papers*, vol. II, 305.

943 FO 20/11, Portland to Elliot, July 1796.

scale, deserves that a fleet and army should be kept for their security, is well deserving of serious consideration”.⁹⁴⁴ Nelson believed that “our Corsican brethren have (at least a great part of them) behaved so ill, that I hope our ministry will have no scruple in leaving them most perfectly free and independent”.⁹⁴⁵ Collingwood agreed with Nelson, and heartily wished “that our time of our leaving it [Corsica]” would come soon.⁹⁴⁶ What caused the general denouncement of the Corsicans by British officers serving in Corsica? The rebellions against the Anglo-Corsican government, certainly played a part in causing British dislike of the Corsicans.

What was fundamentally clear was how different the Corsicans were to the British. Before the establishment of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom, Boswell and other writers had attempted to portray the many similarities between the English and Corsicans: both were ‘sister’ islands of liberty. The Corsicans were consistently described as the brave islanders, fighting against tyranny. However, realities on the ground showed that the Corsicans and British were fundamentally different. Elliot commented that “faction is too vehement, personal jealousy is too inherent in the Corsican character”.⁹⁴⁷ Here Elliot referred to the infamous Vendetta, which was an intrinsic part of eighteenth century Corsican society. Elliot described the vendetta as “one of the most rooted particularities in the Corsican character”.⁹⁴⁸ A Corsican was deemed infamous if they “did not revenge the death” of any relation.⁹⁴⁹ Collingwood once noted an episode in Ajaccio, when one Corsican stabbed another in the public square. The culprit simply walked away, wiping his blade. Collingwood recorded with astonishment that no one attempted to stop him. The stabbing did not seem to be a shock for the other Corsicans. These acts led Collingwood to brand the Corsicans as “barbarous” and distinctly alien to the British character.⁹⁵⁰ The peculiarities of the vendetta led the Corsican parliament to suspend the trials by jury enshrined in the Anglo-Corsican Constitution. These trials by jury emulated the British judicial system. However, as Elliot remarked, any Corsican “fears the dishonour of convicting his relation, or his friend, or the relation of

944 Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 172.

945 Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 187.

946 Collingwood, *Public and Private Correspondence*, 37.

947 FO 20/11, Elliot to Portland, 5 June 1796.

948 FO 20/9, Elliot to Portland, 26 December 1795.

949 FO 20/9, Elliot to Portland, 26 December 1795.

950 Collingwood, *Public and Private Correspondence*, 34.

a friend much more than that of breaking his oath as a juror”.⁹⁵¹ Corsica was a small country, where the people exclusively intermarried with each other, which greatly connected the people to one another.⁹⁵² Elliot perhaps at times understood the Corsican character better than many of his British contemporaries. However Elliot also believed in the superiority of the British Empire over any other nation. For example, Elliot believed the superiority of the English aristocracy over the dissolute Italian nobility of Italy was their strength “of character”.⁹⁵³ The main problem was that Britons viewed the world through the lens of their own superiority.

Any subject nation that rebelled against British rule was seen to reject the British constitution, which was considered to be the greatest system in the world. As Elliot made clear to Portland, the Corsicans of the ‘Campo’ still declared their “own attachment to the British government”.⁹⁵⁴ However, for Portland, the late rebellions and proceedings in Corsica “might warrant his majesty in withdrawing his protection from that island”.⁹⁵⁵ The ‘rejection’ of the British system, combined with the apparent expenses of Corsica, made Portland seriously contemplate evacuating the island in July 1796. The order would not come for another two months, however. Why was this the case? Even the rebellions and Corsica’s lack of productivity could not prompt a British evacuation of the island, but they clearly played an important role in determining the future of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. Portland informed Elliot that his majesty would forebear taking the step of evacuating the island for the moment, and to “wait for those events by which the fate of Italy must be decided”.⁹⁵⁶ Corsica was still an important naval base in the Mediterranean. The fate of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was determined by the war which harboured its own creation. The French Revolutionary wars in Italy will be the subject for the final section, and were where the seeds for the fall of the Anglo-Corsican were set.

951 FO 20/9, Elliot to Portland, 26 December 1795.

952 FO 20/9, Elliot to Portland, 26 December 1795.

953 Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 247.

954 FO 20/11, Elliot to Portland, 5 June 1796.

955 FO 20/11, Elliot to Portland, 5 June 1796.

956 FO 20/11, Elliot to Portland, 5 June 1796.

Corsica and the War in Italy

The events in Italy should never be ignored in the study of relations of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. The main reason why Britain conquered Corsica was to strengthen her naval position in the Mediterranean, and to this end, Corsica served two purposes. The first was to enable for the British fleets to observe the French fleet in Toulon, and the second was to provide a base from which to support Britain's allies in Italy. As a result, Britain's navy was the bedrock of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. However, Britain's military force on Corsica was inadequate and complaints regarding the military defence of the island were raised throughout the history of the Corsican Kingdom. As previously noted, Paoli, Stuart and Moore and even Elliot were all aware of the inadequate defences on the island. Collingwood, writing as late as 25 September 1796, claimed that the military establishment on Corsica "till lately, was excessive even to a farce".⁹⁵⁷ As a naval officer, Collingwood was somewhat biased against the military arm of the British establishment. But it was clear that the navy was the only force adequately protecting Corsica. Admiral Christian, in a letter to Lord Spencer, bemoaned the fact that "the British fleet is necessarily called upon to protect Corsica".⁹⁵⁸ Christian was planning for an operation to seize French Guadeloupe, and believed Corsica to be an unnecessary burden for the navy.

The navy provided an even more important service to Corsica than defence: the delivery of supplies. Admiral Jervis complained to Earl Spencer about the situation of Ajaccio. Due to Ajaccio's remote situation, and the "impracticability of the communication by land", it was unsuitable as a naval port.⁹⁵⁹ The relief of the garrison at Ajaccio, and the convergence of ammunition stores were both tasks performed by ships.⁹⁶⁰ The main problem was that Corsica, in its undeveloped state, was unable to provide the supplies required by both the military and naval forces serving in the Mediterranean. Earl Spencer, Lord of the Admiralty informed Dundas that "in Corsica no supplies are to be had but those we send from home".⁹⁶¹ Later Jervis informed

⁹⁵⁷ Collingwood, *Public and Private Correspondence*, 37.

⁹⁵⁸ *Private papers of Earl Spencer*, vol. I, 143.

⁹⁵⁹ *Private Papers of George, second Earl Spencer: First Lord of the Admiralty, 1794-1801*, vol. II, (London: Navy Records Society, 1914), 19.

⁹⁶⁰ *Private Papers of Earl Spencer*, vol. II, 19.

⁹⁶¹ Spencer, *Private Papers of Earl Spencer*, vol. I, 324.

Spencer that all provisions for both the army and navy were received from Leghorn.⁹⁶² Collingwood noted that Britain had hitherto enjoyed free access to all Italian ports, which had “conduced very much to the health and strength of our fleet”.⁹⁶³ He added that: “I do not know how we shall carry on the war single-handed” if the French were to seize the major Italian ports, not because opposing force would have increased, “but because all our supplies will be precarious”.⁹⁶⁴ Collingwood’s complaints over the undeveloped nature of Corsica are better understood in the context of this precarious supply-line. The future of the British navy, and her position in the Mediterranean in general, became dependent upon the Austrian army in Italy.

The situation in Italy had radically changed by 1796. Napoleon’s remarkable campaign and successes in Italy was, for Nelson, nothing less than “extraordinary”.⁹⁶⁵ Nelson feared that “the French will soon oblige Sardinia to be their ally, and that they are disposed to treat Tuscany as an enemy”.⁹⁶⁶ In June 1796, Tuscany subsequently became subservient to France, and Leghorn was seized by French forces. This posed an immediate threat to the safety of Corsica, as Leghorn was the closest mainland Italian port to the island. On 2 July Nelson informed Elliot that he had received orders to blockade Leghorn, and “to be aiding and assisting your excellency in preventing any attempts of the French on the island of Corsica”.⁹⁶⁷ The blockade required ships which were already in short supply in the Mediterranean. More importantly, the French were making active attempts to invade Corsica. Napoleon informed General Vaubois that some eight or nine hundred Corsicans were at Livorno, “destined to return home”.⁹⁶⁸ They were under the command of the Corsican General Gentili, who had previously served Paoli in England. These Corsicans in Livorno personified the split in loyalties of the Corsicans in general: it became a choice between Britain or France. On the 21 May 1796, Napoleon ordered citizen Bonelli, chief of the Battalion, to go to Corsica with eighteen men of his choice. Bonelli was, like Napoleon, a Corsican serving in the French army. He was to carry powder and arms, and 24,000 livres in cash to

⁹⁶² *Private Papers of Earl Spencer*, vol. II, 19.

⁹⁶³ Collingwood, *Public and Private Correspondence*, 36.

⁹⁶⁴ Collingwood, *Public and Private Correspondence*, 36.

⁹⁶⁵ Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 187.

⁹⁶⁶ Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 171.

⁹⁶⁷ Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 198.

⁹⁶⁸ Napoleon Bonaparte, *Correspondance De Napoléon I^{er}*, vol. I, (Paris: Henri Plon, 1858), 497.

“encourage the patriots” on the island.⁹⁶⁹ It was clear that Napoleon was actively aiding the Republican party on Corsica, and this explains the republican party’s increased strength during the summer of 1796. Napoleon informed citizen Sapey that he had sent Citizen Bonelli with thirty men to Corsica. They had been armed with hundred muskets, three hundred pairs of pistols, six thousand pounds of powder to aid the patriots of Corsica.⁹⁷⁰ Citizens Braccini and Paravicini were to stay in Genoa, “to make a correspondence with the Corsican patriots”.⁹⁷¹

How were these French troops able to slip past the British navy? The British were certainly aware of Napoleon’s plans. The British admiral Jervis was aware that Napoleon had sent a ‘mission’ to Corsica “to rouse the island against Britain”.⁹⁷² However, as Nelson revealed, the French were travelling to Corsica in small Greek vessels, which could hold some eight to ten men. It was “almost impossible we can stop any of them”, especially since the French controlled “the whole coast” of Italy.⁹⁷³ The larger ships of the line of the British navy found it hard to detect these small vessels in the water. Nelson believed that when these French or Corsican sympathisers landed in Corsica, they would be “concealed or assisted” by the islanders “rotten at heart”.⁹⁷⁴ Despite vowing to provide protection for Corsica, Britain was unable to prevent the landing of any French sympathizers on the island, and the recent French successes in Italy cast doubts in the minds of the Corsicans. As Nelson admitted to his father, all of Corsica’s “connections are with the French. Great numbers of Corsican officers are in high stations in their army, which cannot be the case with ours”.⁹⁷⁵ Memories of the previous French republican rule of the island offered a vision of an alternative form of government for Corsicans. The French revolutionary system was certainly a far more desirable system than that which had been provided by the previous Bourbon regime: many Corsicans -such as Napoleon- had been able to progress well through the ranks of the French military. The same opportunities were not available within the British system. The French revolution recognised the

969 Napoleon, *Correspondance*, 310.

970 Napoleon, *Correspondance*, 310.

971 Napoleon, *Correspondance*, 310.

972 *Private Papers of Earl Spencer*, vol. II, 47.

973 Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 256.

974 Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 256.

975 Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 245.

Corsicans as citizens, equal to all those in mainland France. Britain in contrast viewed the Corsicans as subjects, and opportunities for advancement were only available within Corsica itself. The door to any advancement in the British military or government remained firmly closed to the Corsicans. This was also due to their Catholic religion, which prevented Corsicans obtaining higher office within Britain itself.

The French republican party did not force Britain to evacuate Corsica. The small isle of Capraja to the north of Corsica, was still held by the Genoese republic. Elliot ordered Nelson to seize the island, which he believed harboured a French agent who had supplied the French Republican party in Corsica with stores and ammunition.⁹⁷⁶ Capraja was seized by Nelson without bloodshed on 18th September 1796, which was a severe blow French plans on Corsica. The French Republican party was still too weak to openly avow their intentions. What caused the government ministers to call for the evacuation of Corsica? This was made clear in the evacuation orders provided by Portland to Elliot on the 31 August 1796. These ‘secret and confidential’ orders did not reach Elliot until late September. Portland informed Elliot that the intentions of Spain would soon “be declared by open acts of hostility”.⁹⁷⁷ The intentions of Spain had always been questioned by senior British officials following their peace with France in 1795, and the potential for war with Spain was the primary reason why British forces were evacuated from Corsica. Nelson was aware in August 1796, that any war with Spain would cause “the necessary evacuation of Corsica, and that our fleet will draw down the Mediterranean” toward Gibraltar.⁹⁷⁸ For Lord Admiral Spencer, the evacuation of Corsica enabled Britain to set their “Mediterranean fleet at liberty, on the probable event of a rupture with Spain”.⁹⁷⁹ Due to the difficult supply-line situation, nearly the “whole of our force” of ships would be needed to protect every convoy of supplies from Gibraltar to Corsica.⁹⁸⁰ It became a military necessity to evacuate Corsica.

⁹⁷⁶ Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 274.

⁹⁷⁷ FO 20/11, Portland to Elliot, 31 August 1796.

⁹⁷⁸ Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 244.

⁹⁷⁹ Spencer, *Private Papers of Earl Spencer*, vol. I, 324.

⁹⁸⁰ Spencer, *Private Papers of Earl Spencer*, vol. I, 324.

However, as Portland's evacuation order noted, there were other major factors which motivated ministers to decide in favour of evacuating Corsica. Portland made it clear to Elliot, that the recent rebellions in Corsica "can be considered as little less than a rejection of his majesty's government, and a subversion of the constitution".⁹⁸¹ His majesty wished to "impart the blessings of the British government", however it was with 'serious concern' and 'regret' "of its returning to a state of anarchy".⁹⁸² The ministry believed the Corsicans had rejected the British 'blessings' of government, long considered to be the greatest in the world. The return to 'anarchy' implied a return to the French revolutionary model in the eyes of the British establishment. The extent to which Portland felt 'regret' over the evacuation of Corsica is questionable. This was highlighted by Portland's belief that "his majesty can no longer dispense with the service of his troops employed on distant objects".⁹⁸³ Corsica was only a 'distant object' and of little worth or value to the commercial British empire. The troops and navy would be redeployed to Portugal, which had shown a much greater "attachment" to Britain than Corsica.⁹⁸⁴ What was clear from the evacuation orders was the idea that the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom had failed. Britain and Corsica were clearly incompatible for union. Therefore, when the spectre of a potential Spanish war was raised, it provided the excuse needed for the British ministry to order the evacuation.

British evacuation of Anglo-Corsican Kingdom: October- November 1796

The evacuation orders from the ministry did not reach Elliot until 29 September 1796. Elliot himself was greatly upset by the "abruptness of the decision", and bemoaned the fact that the evacuation meant "to withdraw the blessings of the British constitution from the people of Corsica".⁹⁸⁵ Elliot argued that the timing of the evacuation was inappropriate, and believed that "the island is at this moment in a most perfect state of loyalty to the king, and affection for the British nation".⁹⁸⁶ Elliot's sentiment here was certainly clouded by his eternal optimism. It was clear that the Anglo-Corsican experiment had failed, and that the security of British rule had been compromised.

British rule of the island relied upon one key tenant: the ability to provide security and

981 FO 20/11, Portland to Elliot, 31 August 1796.

982 FO 20/11, Portland to Elliot, 31 August 1796.

983 FO 20/11, Portland to Elliot, 31 August 1796.

984 FO 20/11, Portland to Elliot, 31 August 1796.

985 Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 355.

986 Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 286.

protection from any enemies. Any questions about Britain's ability to protect Corsica was severely detrimental to ambitions of maintaining the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. This was indeed proven when Elliot informed the municipality of Bastia that Britain intended to evacuate the island. A committee of thirty was nominated to carry on the role of government. Problems began to arise, however, when the committee soon wrested all power from Elliot. Jervis reported to Spencer that the committee became emboldened when a violent gust drove the British ships from anchor. The committee then insisted that an equal number of Corsicans should mount guard at Bastia. They also refused to allow the Viceroy to send messengers to the Corsican generals at Leghorn, and were determined to send their own in order to secure a peaceable transition to French rule.⁹⁸⁷ They were aware of the inevitable French invasion that would follow the British evacuation, and were determined to secure the best possible future for Corsica under France. These the bold assertions underlined the speed with which British power in Corsica had evaporated. The British had indeed abandoned Corsica, leaving the Corsicans no choice other than French rule. Britain had betrayed her pledge of protection to Corsica.

Nelson recorded that on his arrival to Corsica on 14 October the Corsicans had planned to seize the Viceroy, and that "the town was full of armed Corsicans who had mounted guard at every place".⁹⁸⁸ It was clear that the committee had taken control of the town, and refused "to suffer any vessel or boat to quit the mole".⁹⁸⁹ Nelson's arrival with his squadron changed the situation. He sent a clear message to the committee: if there was any interference in the British evacuation, the ships would open fire and "batter the town down".⁹⁹⁰ The message, according to Nelson, had the "desired effect", and that the town was so quiet that "no people could behave better".⁹⁹¹ The committee clearly intended to capture the Viceroy in order to obtain earn the favour of the French invasion forces. This became even more apparent as French troops had landed near Cape Corse – to the immediate north of Bastia – on 15 October. Under Nelson's supervision, the evacuation of Corsica was completed by 19 October. The evacuation

⁹⁸⁷ *Private Papers of Earl Spencer*, vol. II, 61.

⁹⁸⁸ Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 301.

⁹⁸⁹ Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 301.

⁹⁹⁰ Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 301.

⁹⁹¹ Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 302.

of Bastia was extremely well timed, as French troops entered Bastia as the last British ships left. A Spanish fleet was also sighted off Cape Corse a day after British forces had been evacuated to the nearby island of Elba.⁹⁹²

The arrival of French forces and the Spanish fleet shortly after the last British ships had left Bastia, emphasised how vulnerable Corsica was to invasion. The evacuation of Bastia was ineptly handled until Nelson's timely arrival. The evacuation of the British citadels of St Fiorenzo and Calvi was complete by 23 October, thus ending the last vestiges of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. The evacuation of Corsica was certainly justified considering the major shift in strategic and military considerations. However, the government soon reneged on its idea for the evacuation of the island. Perhaps the most farcical action taken by the British government concerning Corsica was its decision on the 19 October, to send counter orders to Admiral Jervis, that "his majesty's fleet should be continued in the Mediterranean, and that the measures for the evacuation of Corsica should be suspended".⁹⁹³ What brought about this radical reversal? The answer was that the ministry had made a proposal to the Catherine the Great (1729-1796) of Russia. Russia, and in particular the empress, had long had her own interest in the island, something which dated back to the 1760s. The Russian interest in Corsica during the eighteenth century is deserving of its own thesis. The British ministry hoped to obtain "the consent of the people of that island to transfer the sovereignty thereof to the Empress".⁹⁹⁴ In return the British would retain the "commerce of his majesty's subjects in peace" and the use of certain ports "in time of war".⁹⁹⁵

The British ministry recognised that any future union between Britain and Corsica was impossible but, the ministry still wanted to secure the two interests which were of the utmost importance for the British Empire: continued commerce and the use of Corsica's naval bases. This farcical move to change the orders concerning the evacuation of Corsica, summed up the decision-making aptitude of the British

⁹⁹² Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 303.

⁹⁹³ *Report on the Manuscripts of J.B Fortescue, preserved at Dropmore*, vol. III, (London: Majesty's Stationary Office, 1899), 261.

⁹⁹⁴ *Report on the Manuscripts of J.B Fortescue*, Vol. III, 261.

⁹⁹⁵ *Report on the Manuscripts of J.B Fortescue*, Vol. III, 261.

ministry. The Lord of the Admiralty Earl Spencer was “unsettled and anxious” over the “contradictory nature of the various orders” sent out to Corsica.⁹⁹⁶ Once Britain’s intention to evacuate Corsica had been announced, their power and rule over the island had effectively ceased. Fortunately, as Jervis later informed Spencer, it was “a great blessing that the evacuation of Corsica had taken place before I received the orders to maintain the Viceroy in the sovereignty of it, which could not have been effected for any length of time, as the moment the enemy had landed in force, every man in the interior of the island would have taken part with him, and there was not a tenable post in it”.⁹⁹⁷ The decision to countermand the evacuation of Corsica was made on the 19 October, the day Bastia was evacuated. Messages from London took nearly a month to reach British forces in the Mediterranean, and so Jervis only received the second set of orders on 11 November. The sovereignty of British rule of Corsica was based upon her ability to properly protect the island from French invasion. Once that had been compromised, British forces could no longer rule the island effectively.

The reaction in Britain to the evacuation of Corsica was muted. The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom had primarily been a government venture. This was in complete contrast to the vast popular support for the Corsican cause in 1768, as illustrated in the second chapter. The Corsican crisis in 1768 dominated the main newspaper headlines, and a considerable number of column inches were allocated to reporting on Corsica. This was in part influenced by the publication of Boswell’s highly popular *Account of Corsica* in February 1768, only a few months before the French invasion of the island. In contrast, the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom had a mixed reception in the main newspapers and periodicals, and those who supported the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom were generally government writers. Those who came out against the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom were opposition writers – a complete reversal of the situation in 1768. Most of the British press contained the papers from Paris, which reported the evacuation of Corsica, but the matter prompted little reaction from the majority of British newspapers. The 1-3 December edition of the *St James Chronicle* justified the government’s decision to evacuate Corsica. For the *St James Chronicle*, the evacuation showed that the government was willing to adopt measures “which may ultimately

⁹⁹⁶ Spencer, *Private Papers of Earl Spencer*, vol. I, 329.

⁹⁹⁷ *Private Papers of Earl Spencer*, vol. II, 71.

secure our best interests”.⁹⁹⁸ The newspaper alluded to the possibility of peace talks, and the British occupation of Corsica was seen to be a hindrance to those negotiations. The 22 November edition of the *Morning Post and Fashionable World* argued that while the world would comfort Louis XVIII and Stadtholder for the loss of their thrones, “the dethroning of King Gilbert Elliot will excite universal contempt and laughter”.⁹⁹⁹ The *Morning Post and Fashionable World* was a well-known opposition newspaper, and the article reflected the attitude that Corsica was of little importance to the British crown; Elliot was portrayed as a somewhat farcical character. Perhaps the only major public opposition to the evacuation in Britain was from Edmund Burke, who believed Britain to be “mad” for evacuating Corsica.¹⁰⁰⁰ But the general consensus was that the British fleet in the Mediterranean was needed closer to British shores, following Spain’s declaration of war. The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom had never endeared itself to broad public support in Britain; in fact, it had alienated many.

Conclusion: Why did the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom fail?

The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom ended any aspirations Britain may have had over Corsica. Nelson confirmed that Britain was “now done with Corsica; I have seen the first and last of that Kingdom”.¹⁰⁰¹ He believed that Corsica’s “situation certainly was most desirable for us, but the generality of its inhabitants are so greedy of wealth, and so jealous of each other, that it would require the patience of Job, and the riches of Croesus to satisfy them”.¹⁰⁰² Nelson referred to the biggest issue the British government had on Corsica: the considerable expenses incurred for its administration. Due to the undeveloped nature of the island, major investment had been required to enable Corsica to return an annual profit to British coffers. Ultimately, the British Empire was motivated primarily by the acquisition of resources and wealth to augment its mercantile system. Ironically, Nelson’s claims of the Corsicans “greed” mirrored the British forces’ own reason for being on the island. The harsh criticisms of the Corsicans themselves stemmed from the belief that they had rejected the British constitutional system, which was believed to be the greatest in the world. The Corsican

998 *St James Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, (London, England), 1-3 December 1796; Issue 6077.

999 *Morning Post and Fashionable World*, (London, England), 22 November 1796; Issue 7705.

1000 *The Windham Papers*, vol. II, 25.

1001 Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 298.

1002 Nelson, *Dispatches*, vol. II, 298.

rejection of that system meant that they were ‘unworthy’ of British protection. As highlighted throughout this chapter, the primary source of Corsican grievance was taxation. Throughout the eighteenth century, Corsica had been in near constant rebellion, as both the Genoese and French were unable to implement their own effective taxation systems. The Corsicans naturally rejected any attempts by Britain to impose any sort of taxes. The other main grievance was the misrule of certain Corsican ministers, namely Pozzo di Borgo. In this respect, the Viceroy was at fault. Elliot promoted certain favourites to office. These favourites had little wealth of their own and were therefore seen to be reliant entirely upon the favours and money provided to them by the Anglo-Corsican government. Pozzo di Borgo himself was particularly unpopular, especially after his fallout with Paoli. The rebellions against British rule were primarily motivated by the two issues of taxes and favouritism. Perhaps if Elliot had acquiesced to some of these demands in the summer of 1795, rather than May 1796, the island might have become more settled. Elliot failed to understand the chief grievances of his Corsican subjects.

The Anglo-Corsican constitution itself contained the seeds for the future internal discord which broke out, and the office of Viceroy was a particularly contentious matter. The office was never raised during the discussions at Murato in January 1794, and was a later invention. The idea of a Viceroy implied an office of a higher level than that of a governor, or even the Lord lieutenant in Ireland. This title caused unnecessary problems, particularly concerning the extent of the Viceroy’s powers, which caused frictions with both General Stuart and Paoli. Whether or not Elliot was the right man for the job remains another contentious issue. Elliot’s character in particular seems unsuited for the difficult office he was to inherit. He was overly optimistic, even at the worst of times, and this often clouded his judgement. He was also particularly fearful and jealous of those who could threaten his authority. The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom may have thrived if the principal actors had been able to work together. Stuart’s own disruptive personality also cannot be ignored, as it caused problems for all of his superiors. When Stuart was later appointed as General in Portugal, Burke observed that he had never heard of his abilities. Burke believed that Stuart’s “civil disposition” in “his late proceedings in our quondam Kingdom of

Corsica afford a sufficient indication” of his military abilities.¹⁰⁰³ Stuart’s disruptive nature during his time in Corsica was well known.

Paoli was also a particularly untrustworthy character; Collingwood suggested that Paoli in England could stir the “whole country to revolt and rebellion” by simply expressing his will.¹⁰⁰⁴ This was certainly an exaggeration, but Collingwood’s language suggested a certain amount of distrust. This was the primary reason why Paoli was not entrusted with the office of Viceroy. Paoli was certainly a major tie between Britain and Corsica. He was an Anglophile, and one of the founders of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. Without his initiative, British intervention on the island may never have taken place. His virtual exile from Corsica in 1795 severed a major tie between Corsica and Britain. Paoli’s absence from Corsica, however, did not mean the end for the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. Sir Gilbert Elliot was stubborn, especially with regard to those he believed to be his enemies, and the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom did not provide for an effective opposition. Any who opposed the Corsican government were viewed as rebellious. Paoli had wanted a valid legal opposition in the style of the British parliamentary system. Instead, the Viceroy’s government was autocratic – the complete opposite of the British model – and used financial favours to pay off potential opposition to his government.

What must not be forgotten is that the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom existed in a wartime context. Elliot could not afford for a large opposition to the government to exist because any official opposition could potentially collaborate with the French. Elliot himself never truly understood the Corsican character. His ‘jealous’ character cast doubts over his ability within the ministry and also by the King. Elliot himself, however, cannot be blamed for the downfall of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. He dealt with the rebellions particularly well and without bloodshed. As Elliot understood, English occupation was reliant upon “cordial co-operation of the people with the authorities”; it would be “absurd and unwarrantable” to hold the island by force, which would only lead to civil war.¹⁰⁰⁵ Elliot was indeed forced to co-operate with the

¹⁰⁰³*The Windham Papers*, vol. II, 25.

¹⁰⁰⁴Collingwood, *Public and Private correspondence*, 36.

¹⁰⁰⁵Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 339.

Corsican rebels, particularly those of the ‘Campo’ in May 1796, due to the small size of the British force he had at hand. He also fostered far more friendly relations with the naval officers. Admirals Hood, Jervis and Nelson all respected Elliot, and praised his abilities as Viceroy. Nonetheless Elliot’s character tended to alienate his contemporaries. Ultimately, it cannot be conclusively said that the Viceroy Elliot can be blamed for the failure of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom.

The failure of the Anglo-Corsican kingdom can be rested firmly on the lap of the British ministry. Its actions concerning Corsica can only be described as inept. Little money was spent on developing the island. Elliot made it clear to Portland that a “pecuniary sacrifice” needed to be made “in the first period of our connection to” Corsica.¹⁰⁰⁶ Elliot divided the development of Corsica into ‘periods’. The first period required the necessary expenses from the British government to develop the commercial and industrial features of Corsica. Elliot himself was committed to the long term future of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. The ministry in contrast seemed to quickly lose interest in the project. The Prime Minister Pitt in particular was never committed to maintaining the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom. Sir Gilbert’s wife Lady Elliot, complained to her friend Lady Malmesbury on 8 June 1796, that they had “heard nothing official for eight months”.¹⁰⁰⁷ Elliot made it clear that he needed to be seen as strongly supported from home. Instead, the ministry rarely sent responses to his many letters. The time dispatches took to reach London and vice-versa was also a significant problem. Perhaps with more troops and money, the history of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom may have been different. However, the existence of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom rested firmly upon Britain’s successes in the French Revolutionary wars. The Anglo-Corsican constitution contained one other major promise: that of protection. With the war against Britain and their allies in 1796, the ability to provide that protection for Corsica was cast into doubt. Elliot noted that the circumstances of the war “pointed to a not distant abandonment by Great Britain of Corsica, and justified the restlessness of the islanders”.¹⁰⁰⁸ The British ministry in fact never showed enough commitment to holding Corsica. Britain’s protection of Corsica seemed to be based

¹⁰⁰⁶FO 20/22, Elliot to Portland, 8 February 1795.

¹⁰⁰⁷Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 345.

¹⁰⁰⁸Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 343.

entirely upon her successes in the war. When the war turned in France's favour, the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom seemed doomed, because there were never enough troops available to effectively defend the island. The decision to evacuate Corsica however was the correct decision, considering the military and political circumstances. Spain's declaration of war made it nearly impossible for Britain to hold Corsica. Due to the small size of British forces on Corsica, its defence relied solely upon the British Mediterranean fleet, which would be hopelessly outnumbered by a Franco-Spanish fleet. The evacuation of Corsica was also determined by the change in fortunes of the war in general. Britain was drawing her forces back to defend the mainland. This would prove to be prudent policy following Austria's withdrawal from the war in 1797.

Elliot believed that Corsica would enable Britain's fleets to "encourage and protect those in much need of support, and might by her counsels accustom them to larger and more masculine views of policy than they were inclined to adopt".¹⁰⁰⁹ The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom however failed to provide an example of 'masculine' or stable policy to the other Italian states. Quite the opposite occurred; the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom showcased the weaknesses and ineptitude of the British system. It was a shambolic model for the Italian states to follow, let alone any other nation. Rather than fostering future relations between states, the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom only created tension and problems. The Spanish declaration of war on Britain, dated 5 October 1796, was in part caused by Britain's taking possession of Corsica, which "was concealed with the greatest care".¹⁰¹⁰ Another Spanish complaint concerned the acts of piracy by Corsican privateers who "protected by the English government in the island, destroy the Spanish trade in the Mediterranean".¹⁰¹¹ The British occupation of Corsica only served to antagonise Spain, who had her own historical claims to the island.

What originally drew the British into Corsica was the promise of wealth and commerce, and ultimately a strategic naval base. Rousseau and Boswell's writings provided the main ideas and impetus behind British intervention into Corsica.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Elliot, *Life and Letters*, 247.

¹⁰¹⁰ Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England, vol. XXXII, 1287.

¹⁰¹¹ Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England, vol. XXXII, 1288.

Therefore, British involvement on the island cannot merely be explained by the simple desire for a naval base in the Mediterranean. Control of Bastia or Ajaccio would have sufficed for this purpose. According to Rousseau and Boswell, Corsica had the potential to become a major commercial hub in the Mediterranean. Boswell in particular emphasised the fact that Corsica was sister island of liberty. Only by understanding British ideas of Corsica in 1768, can you understand the strange and unique Anglo-Corsican constitution adopted in 1794. The British legislators were informed and heavily influenced by the ideas raised by Boswell and other British writers. More importantly, there was one major actor who was involved in both 1768 and 1794: Pasquale Paoli. Paoli was the main instigator for bringing Britain into Corsica, and although he failed in 1768, he would ultimately succeed in 1794. The formation of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom cannot be understood without understanding Britain's continued interest in the island throughout the eighteenth century, something first forged by the Corsican revolt against Genoese rule in 1728. British ideas of Corsica in 1740 were somewhat similar to those of the island in 1768. Boswell's *Account of Corsica* was the main source of information from which Britons drew their ideas about Corsica. The ideas behind British intervention into Corsica in 1794 were the same raised in 1768. This time however, the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was firmly a government project, unlike in 1768, when the Corsican cause was mainly embraced by the opposition to government. The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was the culmination of continued British interest in the island throughout the eighteenth century.

The main reason why the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom failed was that the ideas that informed British opinions of Corsica were wrong. Corsica was a barren backwater, with little scope for potential as a commercial hub in the Mediterranean. The Corsican character was far different to the British, and the British administrators largely failed to understand it, finding it alien and barbaric. The Anglo-Corsican Kingdom in fact confirmed only one thing: Britain and Corsica were incompatible for any form of union. What the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom does provide, however, is a unique insight into the British administration of a large European territory during this period. Barring Hanover, which was governed primarily by a German administration, Britain ruled no

other large territories in Europe during the eighteenth century. Gibraltar and Minorca were primarily naval bases, with only small native populations. Corsica in contrast had a substantial native population, with its own unique history. The Anglo-Corsican constitution highlighted how differently Britain treated her subjects in Europe to those outside. The Anglo-Corsican constitution was unique in the constitutional history of Britain, and in certain instances provided greater rights to its parliament, than the constitution in England. Perhaps most surprisingly was the recognition of Catholicism as the official religion of the island, despite the fact that Catholics in both England and Ireland were banned from holding office. However, the Anglo-Corsican constitution was based primarily upon the previous ideas and notions Britain had had of Corsica. The only achievement of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom was that it firmly destroyed the myths and ideas many Britons had mistakenly held about the island. Corsicans looked to France rather than Britain for future relations. Pasquale Paoli ultimately failed in his attempt for a British link with Corsica, and spent the rest of his days in exile in England. Corsica ultimately became identified with France, and the most famous Corsican in history: Napoleon Bonaparte.

Conclusion: Britain and Corsica 1797-1815

Desmond Gregory concluded in his book *The Ungovernable Rock* (1985), that the ‘experiment’ of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom “had been effectively tested and rejected in the years 1794-1796”.¹⁰¹² As seen in the previous chapter, both the British and Corsicans had effectively rejected any future union with each other. Admiral Jervis did not believe “the page of history can produce an instance of such rascally business and ingratitude, for the whole island has been enriched by the generosity of our government”.¹⁰¹³ The British fleet had retreated to Gibraltar by early 1797. Despite the strong condemnations of Corsica by British naval officers, the island was still considered as a future strategic target. In a letter sent to the First Lord of the Admiralty Lord Spencer on 30 June 1797, Jervis noted that “though I disapprove of any close connexion with Corsica, advantage may be taken in future wars, by preserving a communication with that perfidious race”.¹⁰¹⁴ Despite describing the Corsicans as ‘perfidious’, Jervis still believed it to be of ‘advantage’ to maintain connection with the island. Why? As Gregory noted, there was still a need for a base to watch the main French naval base of Toulon. This was supplied in 1798, when the British were able to retake Minorca from Spain (returned in 1802).¹⁰¹⁵ Corsica however did not become a major strategic target again during the French Revolutionary Wars (1792-1799). The bad relations incurred from 1794-1796 made Corsica a less attractive target. As this thesis has shown, more than just strategic factors motivated Britain to annex Corsica. The intellectual ideas Britons had of the island were firmly proven to be a lie by 1796. Corsicans were now considered to be a treacherous clan-ridden nation, rather than the Spartan heroes described by both Rousseau and Boswell.

A unique set of circumstances needed to be in place in order for any British incursion into Corsica to take place. Britain during the eighteenth century seemed in general to be reluctant to intervene or annex any territory in Europe with a large native

1012 Desmond Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock: A History of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom, and its Role in Britain’s Mediterranean Strategy during the Revolutionary War (1793-1797)*, (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1985), 183.

1013 *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer: First Lord of the Admiralty, 1794-1801*, vol. II, (London: Navy Records Society, 1914), 63.

1014 *Private papers of George, second Earl Spencer*, vol.II, 211.

1015 Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock*, 181.

population. Corsica was rather an exception to this rule; only the promises made by the Anglophile Paoli led Britain to intervene on the island in the first place. They were motivated by the belief that Corsica was a rudimentary blank canvas, which could be developed with British constitutional ideals. Britain's annexation of Corsica was influenced by their belief that British constitutional government was the most superior in the world. British 'liberties' however was simply the way in which Britain chose to represent themselves. British liberty was a guise to the true nature of the British empire; the mercantile system. Was Britain attempting to promote a cosmopolitan empire based upon commerce, or simply attempting to extend the interests of the metropolis? What was clear was that Corsica had become another battle ground in the contest between British commercial and the rival French Republican empire during the 1790s.

This intellectual debate came to the fore during the turn of the nineteenth century, when "the shape of a future peace settlement was again being debated throughout Europe".¹⁰¹⁶ Emma Rothschild, in her article *Language and Empire C.1800* (2005) has argued that two alternative forms of Empire emerged; the "eternal empire of commodities" of the English and the "eternal empire of ideas" of France.¹⁰¹⁷ It was clear that Britain was not simply attempting a counter-revolutionary movement, aimed at curtailing the French revolutionary settlement in Europe. Britain attempted to promote their version of commercial empire, through their client Frederick Von Gentz (1764-1832), and his published work *Essai sur l'état actuel de l'administration des finances et de la richesse nationale de la Grande-Bretagne* (1800). This work was a series of facts and figures stating the great growth of British capital, which spread from the "mines of Carinthia to the looms of Bengal".¹⁰¹⁸ Alexandre D'Hauterive's (1754-1830) 'provocative' work the *State of the French Republic at the End of the year VIII* (1800), provided a response to Gentz's assertions. D'Hauterive famously asserted that England was "aiming at the Universal Empire of Maritime commerce".¹⁰¹⁹ Gentz

¹⁰¹⁶ Isaac Nakhimovsky, *The Closed Commercial State*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) 65.

¹⁰¹⁷ Emma Rothschild, "Language and Empire, C1800" *Historical Research*, vol. 78, no. 200 (May 2005), 208-29, 208

¹⁰¹⁸ Rothschild, "Language and empire", 211.

¹⁰¹⁹ Alexandre d'Hauterive, *State of the French Republic*, tr. Lewis Goldsmith, (London: Printed for J.S. Jordan, 1801), 130.

continued the debate, by providing a response to D'Hauterive's work with his *On the state of Europe before and after the French Revolution*, first published in 1801. Gentz argued against D'Hauterive's claim that England practised commercial tyranny. For Gentz, the "exclusive preference given to English manufactures in the markets of Europe, is not the effort of compulsion, but of choice".¹⁰²⁰ Gentz argued that "no nation can procure, transport, and, of course, sell so cheap as the English".¹⁰²¹ It made economic sense to trade primarily with English markets. It was this idea that first drew Britain into Corsica. They desired to access the promised great commercial wealth of Corsica. The lack of real wealth found on Corsica only added to the disappointment felt by the British administrators on the island.

However, Britain was not drawn into Corsica only for the promise of their commercial wealth. Britain throughout the eighteenth century aimed primarily to annex small, largely barren islands or spits of land, that could be easily developed into naval/military bases, such as Gibraltar and Minorca. Another example of this policy could be seen with Malta. Malta was captured by Napoleon in 1798, on the way to his rather outrageous expedition to Egypt. Ironically, during the British naval expedition to Egypt, a rather interesting comparison arose. Capitan Troubridge, who served with Nelson, noted that he had took possession of the island of Bequieres (see appendix 4), following Nelson's victory over the French fleet at the Battle of the Nile (August 1-3 1798). Troubridge admitted that this acquisition "is not so bright a gem in the British crown as Corsica, but as it was attended with no loss or expense, I am inclined to think it equally valuable".¹⁰²² Corsica was still described as a "valuable gem". However, Troubridge's language revealed another major reason why Britain did not make another attempt to annex Corsica; the acquisition and maintenance of Bequieres was attended "with no loss or expense". The expense incurred by the British administration of Corsica outweighed the income produced by the island, although, as noted in the previous chapter, British expenses on the island were inconsequential in comparison to the money supplied elsewhere during the French Revolutionary wars. For example,

¹⁰²⁰Frederich Gentz, *On the state of Europe*, tr. John Herries, (London: Printed for J. Hatchard, 1802), 338.

¹⁰²¹Gentz, *On the state of Europe*, 333.

¹⁰²² *Private papers of George, second Earl Spencer*, vol. II, 481.

Britain's ally Austria was given a loan of some £1,620,000 in the year 1797 alone.¹⁰²³ This fact however did little to mask the disappointment of the British officers and administrators on Corsica, upon finding an undeveloped, poor island. The British empire was first and foremost a commercial empire. The great commercial wealth of Corsica promised by both Boswell and Paoli did not exist. As David Abulafia has noted in his book *The Great Sea: A human history of the Mediterranean* (2011); Paoli had "overestimated" the "usefulness of Corsica".¹⁰²⁴

The British captured Malta from the French in 1800. Malta in contrast to Corsica, had a far smaller native population, and would cost far less to maintain in consequence. The Peace of Amiens in 1802 provided the only period of peace between Britain and France during the period 1793-1815. Malta became a friction point during the peace negotiations. As A.T Mahan noted in his book *The Influence of sea power upon the French revolution and Empire* (1892), Malta was an "important naval station, secretly coveted by both" Britain and France.¹⁰²⁵ The British refusal to evacuate Malta in part caused the resumption of hostilities in 1803. Why were the British so reluctant to evacuate Malta? Malta was the 'gateway' to the east. Napoleon (now head of France) certainly had more interests in the eastern Mediterranean, as seen from his failed expedition to Egypt. Corsica became less of an important strategic target during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815). Nelson's great victory at Trafalgar in 1805 ended the threat of French/Spanish naval dominance. The need for a harbour to watch the French naval base of Toulon was "not as pressing as it had been" before.¹⁰²⁶ The Napoleonic wars shifted the attention of the British and French more to the central and eastern Mediterranean. Gregory has noted that the British fleets task of protecting the eastern Mediterranean "could best be done from Malta and Sicily".¹⁰²⁷ Sicily remained a British base and ally throughout the Napoleonic wars. Sicily and Malta would remain the "vital strategic points" after French rule extended to all of Italy, the Dalmatian

1023 John Sherwig, *Guineas and Gunpowder: British Foreign Aid in the Wars with France 1793-1815*, (Cambridge: Harvard university press, 1969), 365

1024 David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean*, (London: Penguin books, 2011), 514.

1025 A.H Mahan, *The Influence of sea power upon the French revolution and Empire*, vol. II, (London: Marston and Company, 1892), 72.

1026 Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock*, 182.

1027 Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock*, 182.

coast and even certain Greek islands such as Corfu.¹⁰²⁸ Thus there was a less pressing need to return to Corsica and the western Mediterranean.

However, Britain did return very briefly to Corsica in 1814. Following Napoleon's abdication at Fontainebleau (11 April 1814), the strategic situation became very fluid and uncertain. Lord William Bentinck (1774-1869) became commander of the British forces in Sicily in 1811. In 1814, Bentinck was certainly aware of the opportunities during this period. Napoleon's defeat and the subsequent retreat of French armies in Europe left a major power vacuum, particularly in Italy. A quarter of a century of warfare was finally coming to an end; "no one quite knew what might happen".¹⁰²⁹ John Rosselli, in his book *Lord William Bentinck: The making of a liberal imperialist 1774-1839* (1974), comments that Bentinck acted less from concrete evidence "than from intuition and from a desperate sense of opportunity slipping away".¹⁰³⁰ Bentinck landed in Leghorn in March, and captured Genoa the following month. Bentinck's intentions were made clear in a letter sent to prime minister Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh (1769-1822), on 23 April 1814. Bentinck planned to set up a provisional government in Genoa, as soon as he could ascertain "persons who may be acceptable to the people".¹⁰³¹ Bentinck commented that he found many Genoese desired "their former independence and ancient form of government, with some modifications". More importantly, "all are equally desirous of not being annexed to Piedmont".¹⁰³² Bentinck was aware that Britain intended to hand Genoa over to Piedmont. Bentinck did not want an Italy dominated by both Austria and Piedmont; he hoped to establish a "united Italy as a barrier against both France and Austria".¹⁰³³

Bentinck's plan to free Italy from French and Austrian influence also involved Corsica. In one of the most remarkable episodes in this entire thesis, British troops were sent to Corsica in what Rosselli has described as "an abortive repetition" of the Anglo-

¹⁰²⁸ Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock*, 182.

¹⁰²⁹ John Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck: The Making of a Liberal imperialist 1774-1839*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 170.

¹⁰³⁰ Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck*, 169.

¹⁰³¹ *Correspondence, Dispatches, and other Papers, of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry*, vol. IX, ed. Charles William Vane, (London: John Murray, Albemarle street, 1853), 491.

¹⁰³² *Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, vol. IX, 491

¹⁰³³ *Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, vol. IX, 491

Corsican Kingdom.¹⁰³⁴ It seems that even at this juncture in time, Bentinck had not given up the ghost of British rule in Corsica, as he attempted to resurrect “the Kingdom of Corsica that had been established twenty years earlier”.¹⁰³⁵ Discontent on the island of Corsica became widespread following the abdication of Napoleon. The municipalities of Saint-Florent, Bastia and L’Ile Rousse sent a petition to Bentinck asking to send troops to the island. After British troops arrived, Bentinck signed the Treaty of Bastia with Louis-Alexandre Berthier (1753-1815) in April 1814, which conferred sovereignty of the island to Britain. Berthier was formerly a marshal of Napoleon. By the time the treaty was signed, Berthier seemed to have questionable authority to transfer the sovereignty of Corsica to Britain, especially after Napoleon’s abdication.

Did both Britain and Corsica wish for another union in 1814? Castlereagh, in his response to Bentinck, dated 6 May 1814, believed that the resistance of the Corsicans “was levelled against the tyranny of Bonaparte alone”.¹⁰³⁶ Castlereagh also made it clear to Bentinck that he had no intention in undermining “the auspicious restoration of the ancient family to the throne of France”.¹⁰³⁷ It was clear that in the case of Corsica, Bentinck was acting relatively independently of the British ministry. Castlereagh informed Bentinck that it was “impossible for Great Britain to countenance, under the present circumstances, any measure of separation, on the part of the Corsicans, from France”.¹⁰³⁸ Castlereagh did not want to undermine the position of the Bourbons, who had just been restored. The convention in Paris had just decided that Louis XVIII (1755-1824) was sovereign of Corsica. Bentinck’s adventure was somewhat of an embarrassment for Castlereagh. Castlereagh informed Bentinck that he needed to conciliate the Corsicans “goodwill to their lawful sovereign Louis XVIII”, so the late events may not “have the effect of compromising their interests with the new government”.¹⁰³⁹ In effect, Castlereagh ordered Bentinck to repudiate the Treaty of Bastia for the sake of the restored Bourbon monarchy. British troops were subsequently withdrawn from Corsica.

¹⁰³⁴ Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck*, 176.

¹⁰³⁵ Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock*, 182.

¹⁰³⁶ *Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, vol. X, 15.

¹⁰³⁷ *Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, vol. X, 14.

¹⁰³⁸ *Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, vol. X, 15.

¹⁰³⁹ *Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, vol. X, 15.

Thus ended the brief British foray into Corsica at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Gregory agreed with Castlereagh, that it was Bonapartist rule that was rejected in Corsica; “there was no real desire to re-embrace British rule”.¹⁰⁴⁰ The “Corsican people as a whole had not backed the Treaty of Bastia”; the Court of Appeal in Ajaccio had denied the legality of the treaty.¹⁰⁴¹ More importantly, Castlereagh and the British ministry had rejected the treaty’s legality, in their attempt to bolster the fledgling Bourbon regime. What should we make of this rather strange episode? It was clear that the phantom of British rule some twenty years previously had motivated Bentinck in his attempt to annex Corsica for Britain. He was also motivated by his desire to rid Italy of French and Austrian influence. Bentinck also failed in his attempt to re-establish an independent Genoese Republic. Castlereagh was desirous that Bentinck “should not take any steps to encourage the formation which at present seems to prevail in Italy, in question of government”.¹⁰⁴² However, Castlereagh also promised Bentinck that there was “a great moral change coming on in Europe, and that the principles of freedom are in full operation”.¹⁰⁴³ Castlereagh informed Bentinck that the British government had to ‘abstain’ from decisions made in Italy if they wished to act in concert with Austria and Sardinia-Piedmont. Castlereagh spoke of the dangers of a transition in Italy, that “may be too sudden to ripen into anything likely to make the world better or happier”.¹⁰⁴⁴ France, Spain, Holland and Sicily had formulated new constitutions; “let us see the result before we encourage further attempts”.¹⁰⁴⁵ Castlereagh, like Bentinck was what Rosselli described as a ‘liberal Imperialist’. Both hoped for an Italy without the foreign influences of France and Austria. However, Corsica was not included within this liberal imperialist framework. Corsica’s future it would seem, remained firmly with France.

There were no subsequent British attempts to annex Corsica after 1814. In fact, it was remarkable that Corsica remained within British imperial ambitions for so long.

However, following Napoleon’s final defeat in 1815, France appeared less of a threat

¹⁰⁴⁰ Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock*, 183.

¹⁰⁴¹ Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock*, 182.

¹⁰⁴² *Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, vol. X, 15.

¹⁰⁴³ *Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, vol. X, 18.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, vol. X, 18.

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, vol. X, 18.

to British imperial ambitions. For most of the nineteenth century, Britain viewed France more as an ally than as an enemy. The ‘Second hundred years war’ of British-French rivalry had come to an end in 1815, with Napoleon’s final defeat at Waterloo. With Britain secure in the Mediterranean with their naval bases at Malta and Corfu, Gregory had concluded, “Corsica had finally disappeared from the ambit of British imperial ambition”.¹⁰⁴⁶ As this thesis has highlighted, British interest in Corsica was not merely motivated by strategic aspirations. The image of the Corsicans as heroic Spartan warriors, painted by both Rousseau and Boswell, persisted throughout the eighteenth century. Boswell in particular promised an island full of potential commercial wealth for Britain. British interest in Corsica became reality with the establishment of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom (1794-1796). The failure of this Kingdom quashed the previous notions many Britons had of the island.

However, to suggest that British-Corsican relations ended in 1796 is not true. Not all Corsicans accepted French rule of the island. From 1798-1802 and 1803-1817, the Royal Corsican Rangers were formed as part of the British military. Formed primarily of Paolist exiles, and with Hudson Lowe (1769-1844) as their commander, the Rangers took part in multiple engagements during the war, such as the Battle of Abukir in Egypt (1801) and the Battle of Maida in Sicily (1806). When the Rangers were reformed in 1803 under Lowe, they could count some 360 Corsican riflemen. They served primarily in the Mediterranean theatre of the war, before being disbanded in 1817. The brief British occupation of Corsica in 1814 also served as an example of an attempt to augment another Anglo-Corsican union. Bentinck's expedition failed as he did not have British governmental support. British governmental support was the only way to ensure any successful venture into Corsica, as seen during the Corsican crisis in 1768-1769. British interest in Corsica after 1796 was primarily for strategic reasons. Bentinck wanted an Italy free from French and Austrian influence: British rule of Corsica could help provide a balance against Austrian and French influence in the region.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock*, 183.

1814 was the last time there was any real possibility of an Anglo-Corsican union. The Corsicans themselves, barring a small minority, had come to realize that “their future must lie with France, not with Britain”.¹⁰⁴⁷ The questions over Corsica’s sovereignty also ended with the long round of British-French rivalry, that had dominated the eighteenth century. Corsica remains a province of France to this day. However, as this thesis has shown, Corsica could easily have become a part of the British Empire. Perhaps more remarkable were the notions and ideals that brought Britain to Corsica. Britain’s foreign policy concerning Corsica was unique in the history of the British empire. The Anglo-Corsican constitution was in certain respects superior to the constitutional framework in England at the time, especially regarding religious toleration. British interest in Corsica certainly remained consistent and strong during the period 1750-1800. This interest was a by-product of the Anglo-French rivalry. The British occupation of Corsica in 1794-1796 provides a unique insight into British administration of and for an annexed European country. This was an extremely rare occurrence during the eighteenth century. However, what the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom did highlight was the unique relations Britain had with Corsica in general. Both the British and Corsicans were disappointed by each other; both were fundamentally different peoples and cultures. Perhaps most ironic was the fact that both Britain and Corsica were so very different from each other. They were incompatible for a union; too many differences existed. Paoli would die disappointed as an exile in Britain in 1807. He became overshadowed by a Corsican more famous than himself; Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon distanced himself from his Corsican origins after his exile from the island in 1793. He would only return to the island once in 1799, on his way back from his failed Egyptian expedition. Yet Napoleon is still revered as a Corsican hero. He embodied the new order the Corsicans faced at the turn of the century; a future with France. Napoleon certainly characterised himself more as a Frenchman than as a Corsican. He consistently attempted to distance himself from his Corsican heritage. Ironically it was Bonapartist rule of the island that was rejected in 1814, not French ownership. Yet Napoleon characterised the bonds between Corsica and France. Following the French Revolution in 1789, France seemed to offer far more for Corsica than Britain ever could. Perhaps the biggest question of all was how did

¹⁰⁴⁷ Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock*, 183.

Briton's come to hold such erroneous opinions of Corsica? Only perhaps Boswell himself could answer this question.

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Appendix

Appendix 1- Map of Southern Europe pre 1789: Toulon can be seen in south-western part of France



Appendix 2- Title page to James Boswell's *British essays in favour of the brave Corsicans: by several hands*, 1769.



Appendix 3- Map of Corsica, major towns Bastia (north-east), St-Florent (north), Calvi (North-west), Ajaccio (South-West), Corte (upper centre) and Bonifacio (south).



Appendix 4- Plan of the commencement of the action between the British & French fleets in the Bay of Bokkier, otherwise Abouker, Bequieres & Bay of Shoals, in the Mouth of the Nile, 1 August 1798

